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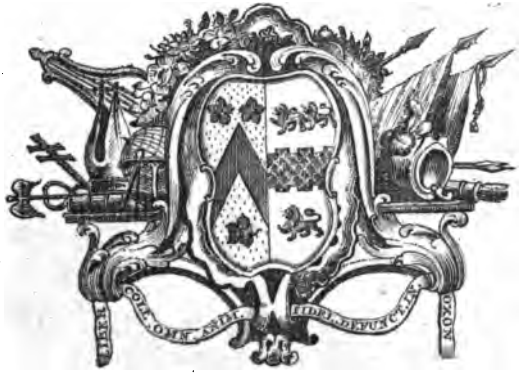

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SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH OF

the late

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

VOLUME V.

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God.

St. PETER.

BY ROBERT ROBINSON.

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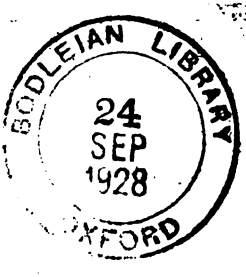
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THE

PREFACE.

IT was not my intention, when I translated the first four volumes of Mr. Saurin's sermons, to add any more: but, willing to contribute my mite towards the pleasure and edification of such as having read the four desired a fifth, I took an opportunity, and added this fifth volume to a second edition of the four first. There is no alteration worth mentioning in the four, except that, the editor thinking the fourth too thin, I have given him a dissertation on the supposed madness of David at the court of Achish, translated from the french of Mr. Dumont, which he has added to increase the size of that volume, following, however, his own ideas in this and not mine.

Saurin's sermons in the orginal are twelve octavo volumes, eleven of which are miscellaneous, and one contains a regular train of sermons for Lent, and is the only *set* of sermons among the whole. The four English volumes are composed of a selection of sermons from the whole with a view to a kind of order, the first being intended to convey proper ideas of the true character of *God*, the second to establish *revelation*, and so on: but this volume is miscellaneous, and contains fourteen sermons on various subjects. For my part, almost all the sermons of our author are of equal value in my eye, and each seems to me to have a beauty peculiar to itself, and superior in its kind: but when I speak thus I wish to be understood.

It is not to be imagined, that a translator adopts *all* the sentiments of his author. To approve of a man's religious views in general is a reason sufficient to engage a person to translate, and it would be needless, if not arrogant, to enter a protest in a note against every word in which the author differed from the translator. In general, I think, Saurin is one

of the first of modern preachers: and his sermons, the whole construction of them, worth the attention of any teacher of christianity, who wishes to excel in his way; but there are many articles taken separately in which my ideas differ entirely from those of Mr. Saurin, both in doctrine, rites, discipline, and other circumstances.

For example, our author speaks a language concerning the *rites* of christianity, which I do not profess to understand. All he says of infant baptism appears to me erroneous, for I think infant baptism an innovation. When he speaks of the Lord's supper, and talks of a *holy* table, *consecration*, *august* symbols, and sublime *mysteries* of the sacrament, I confess, my approbation pauses, and I feel the exercise of my understanding suspended, or rather diverted from the preacher to what I suspect the sources of his mistakes. The Lord's supper is a commemoration of the most important of all events to us, the death of Christ; but I know of no mystery in it, and the primitive church knew of none; mystery and transubstantiation rose together, and together should have expired. *August symbols* may seem bombast to us, but such epithets ought to pass with impunity among the gay and ever exuberant sons of France.

Again, in regard to church *discipline*, our author sometimes address civil magistrates to suppress scandalous books of divinity, and exhorts them to protect the church, and to furnish it with sound and able pastors; but when I translate such passages, I recollect, Mr. Saurin was a presbyterian, a friend to establishments, with toleration however, and in his system of church discipline the civil magistate is to *take order* as some divines have sublimely expressed it. My ideas of the absolute freedom of the press, and the independent right of every christian society to elects its own officers, and to judge for itself in every possible case of religion oblige me on this subject also to differ from our author.

Further, Mr. Saurin, in his addresses to *ministers* speaks of them in a style much too high for my notions. I think, all christians are *brethren*, and that any man, who understands the christian religion himself, may teach it to one other man, or to two other men, or to two hundred, or to two thousand, if they think proper to invite him to do so; and I suppose what they call ordination not necessary to the exercise of his abilities: much less do I think that there is a secret something, call it holy ghost, or what else

you

you please, that passes from the hand of a clerical ordainer to the whole essence of the ordained, conveying validity, power, indelible character, and so to speak creation to his ministry. Mr. Saurin's colleagues are *levites holy* to the Lord, *ambassadors* of the King of kings, *administrators* of the new covenant, who have written on their foreheads *holiness to the Lord*, and on their breasts the names of the *children of Israel!* In the writings of Moses all this is history: in the sermons of Mr. Saurin all this is *oratory*: in my creed all this is *nonentity*.

It signifies so little to the world what such an obscure man as I believe and approve, that I never thought to remark any of these articles in translating and prefacing the first four volumes: but lest I should seem, while I am propagating truth, to countenance error, I thought it necessary to make this remark. Indeed, I have always flattered myself for differing from Saurin; for I took it for probable evidence that I had the virtue to think for myself, even in the presence of the man of the world the most likely to seduce me. Had I a human oracle in religion, perhaps Saurin would be the man:—but *one is our master even Christ*.

Notwithstanding these objections I honour this man for his great abilities; much more for the holy use he made of them in teaching the christian religion; and also for the seal, which it pleased God to set to his ministry; for he was, in the account of a great number of his brethren, *a chosen vessel* unto the Lord, filled with an *excellent treasure of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, and his ministry was attended with abundant success. As I have been speaking of what I judge his defects, it is but fair to add a few words of what I account his excellencies.

My exact notions of the christian ministry are stated in the tenth sermon of this volume, entitled *the different methods of preachers*. Mr. Saurin, after the apostle Paul, divides christian ministers into three classes. The first *lay another foundation* different from that which is laid. The second build on the right foundation, *wood, hay, and stubble*. The third build on the same foundation, *gold, silver, and precious stones*. I consider Mr. Saurin as one of the last class, and I think it would be very easy to exemplify from his own discourses the five excellencies, mentioned by him as descriptive of the men.

First,

First, there is in our author a wise *choice of subjects*, and no such thing as a sermon on a question of mere curiosity. There are in the twelve volumes one hundred and forty four sermons: but not one on a subject unimportant. I shall always esteem it a proof of a sound prudent understanding in a teacher of religion to make a proper choice of doctrine, text, arguments, and even images and style adapted to the edification of his hearers. Where a man has lying before him a hundred subjects, ninety of which are indisputable, and the remaining ten extremely controverted and very obscure, what but a wayward genius can induce him nine times out of ten to choose the doubtful as the subjects of his ministry?

Saurin excels, too, in the *moral* turn of his discourses. They are all practical, and, set out from what point he will, you may be sure he will make his way to the heart in order to regulate the actions of life. Sometimes he attacks the body of sin, as in his sermon on the *passions*, and at other times he attacks a single part of this body, as in his sermon on the *despair of Judas*; one while he inculcates a particular virtue, as in the discourse on the *repentance of the unchaste woman*, another time piety, benevolence, practical religion in general: but in all he endeavours to diminish the dominion of sin and to extend the empire of virtue.

Again, another character of his discourses is what he calls *solidity*, and which he distinguishes from the falacious glare of mere wit and ingenuity. Not that his sermons are void of invention and acuteness: but it is easy to see his design is not to display his own genius, but to elucidate his subject: and when invention is subservient to argument, and holds light to a subject it appears in character, beautiful because in the service and livery of truth. Mere essays of genius are for schools and under graduates; they ought never to appear in the christian pulpit; for sensible people do not attend sermons to *have men's persons in admiration*, but to receive such instruction and animation as may serve their religious improvement.

Further, our author, to use again his own language, excelled in "weighing in just balances truth against error, probability against proof, conjecture against demonstration, and despised the miserable sophisms of those, who defended truth with the arms of error." We have a fine example of this in the eleventh sermon, on *the deep things of God*, and there fidelity and modesty are blended in a manner extremely pleasing. The doctrine of the divine decrees hath been very

very much agitated, and into two extremes, each under some plausible pretence, divines have gone. Some have not only made up their own minds on the subject, in which they were right, but they have gone so far as to exact a conformity of opinion from others, and have made such conformity the price of their friendship, and, so to speak, a ticket for admittance to the Lord's supper, and church communion: in this they were wrong. Others struck with the glaring absurdity of the former, have gone into the opposite extreme, and thought it needless to form any sentiments at all on this, and on other subjects connected with it. Our author sets a fine example of a wise moderation. On the one hand, with a wisdom that does him honour, he examines the subject, and with the fidelity of an upright soul openly declares in the face of the sun that he hath sentiments of his own, which are those of his own community, and he thinks those of the inspired writers. On the other hand, far from erecting himself, or even his synod, into a standard of orthodoxy, a tribunal to decide on the rights and privileges of other christians, he opens his benevolent arms to admit them to communion, and, with a graceful modesty, to use his own language, *puts his hands on his mouth*, in regard to many difficulties that belong to his own system. I think this sermon may serve for a model of treating this subject, and many others of the christian religion. There is a certain point, to which conviction must go because evidence goes before it to lead the way, and up to this point we believe because we understand: but beyond this we have no faith because we have no understanding, and can have do conviction because we have no evidence. This point differs in different men according to the different strength of their mental powers, and as there is no such thing as a standard soul, by which all other souls ought to be estimated, so there can be no such thing as a human test in a christian church, by which the opinions of other christians ought to be valued. There is one insuperable difficulty, which can never be surmounted, in setting up human tests, that is, *whose opinion shall be the test, yours or mine?* and the only consistent church in the world on this article, is the church of Rome.

Were men as much inclined to unite, and to use gentle healing measures, as they are to divide, and to gratify an arbitrary censorious spirit, they would neither be so ridiculous as to pretend to have no fixed sentiments of their own in religion, nor so unjust as to make their own opinions a standard

standard for all other men. There are in religion some great, principal, infallible truths, and there are various fallible inferences derived by different christians: in the first all agree, in the last all should agree to differ. I think this, I repeat it again, a chief excellence in our author. He has sentiments of his own, but he holds them in a liberal generous manner, no way injurious to the rights of other men.

In the sermon above-mentioned Saurin makes a fifth class, of mean, *superficial* builders without elevation and penetration, and against these he sets such as soar aloft in the exercise of the ministry, and in this also he himself excels. His thoughts on some subjects are lofty, and his language sublime. He is not afraid of considering religion in union with our feelings, nor does he hesitate to address hope and fear, and other passions of our minds with those great truths of the gospel, which are intended to allure, awake, arouse, and excite us to action. Terribly sometimes does he treat of future punishment, and generally under the awful images made use of in holy scripture: delightfully at other times does he speak of eternal happiness in the enjoyment of God. On both these subjects, on the perfections of God, and on the exercise of piety, particularly in the closet, he stretches and soars, not out of sight beyond truth and the reason of things, but so high only as to elevate and animate his hearers. By the most exact rules of a wise and well-directed eloquence most of his sermons are composed: at first cool and gentle like a morning in May, as they proceed glowing with a pleasant warmth and toward the close not so much inflaming as settling and incorporating the fire of the subject with the spirits of his hearers as so to produce the brisk circulation of every virtue of which the heart of man is capable, and all which spend their force in the performance of the duties of life.

Our author always treats his hearers like rational creatures, and excels in laying a ground of argument to convince the judgment before he offers to affect the passions: but what I admire most of all in him is conscientious attachment to the *connected sense of scripture*. The inspired book is that precisely, which ought to be explained in a christian auditory, and above all that part of it the new testament, and the connected sense is that, which only deserves to be called the true and real sense of scripture. By detached passages, as Saurin observes, any thing may be proved from scripture, even

even that there is no God; and I question whether any one of our wretched customs hath so much contributed to produce and cherish error, as that of taking detached passages of scripture for the whole doctrine of scripture on any particular subject. An adept in this art will cull one verse from Obadiah, another from Jude, a third from Leviticus, and a fourth from Solomon's song, and compile a fundamental doctrine to be received as the mind of God by all good christians under the pain of his displeasure. Were this a common man, and not a sublime genius under the influence of the holy Spirit, and so beyond advice, I would presume to counsel him always to cap his medley of a sermon with a text from the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Do we then propose Saurin as a model for all preachers? By no means. But as propose there are diversities of gifts for the edification of the church, each excellent in its kind, so we suppose Saurin a model in his own class. There is in the writings of the apostle Paul one of the finest allegories in the world to illustrate this subject. The christian church is considered under the image of an *human body*, and of this body God is considered as the spirit or *soul*; and the most refined morality is drawn from the fact. *The eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. If one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it; for it is the same God, which worketh all* diversities of gifts *in all* good men. It is highly probable, that what is affirmed of individuals may be true of collective bodies of men. One church may excel in literature, another in purity of doctrine, a third in simplicity of worship, a fourth in administration of ordinances, a fifth in sweetness of temper and disposition, and so on. It is not for us to invesigate this subject now: let it suffice to obseive that the French reformed church hath excelled in a clear, convincing and animating way of composing and delivering christian sermons. Never so warm as to forget reasoning, never so accurate as to omit energy, not always placid, not always rapid, never so moral as to be dry and insipid, never so evangelical and savoury as to spiritualize the scriptures till *the fat of a kindey* is as good a body of divinity as the whole sermon of Jesus Christ on the mount. Different as my ideas of some subjects are from those of Mr. Saurin, yet I wish we had a Saurin in every parish: yea so intirely would I go into the doctrine of the apostle's allegory just now mentioned, that I would encourage even a builder of

wood, hay and stubble, suppose he erected his absurdities *on the foundation laid* in scripture, to *destroy the works of the devil* in any place where those works are practised. In a village made up of a stupid thing called a squire, a mercenary priest, a set of intoxicated farmers, and a train of idle profligate and miserable poor, and where the barbarous rhymes in their church yard inform us that they are all either gone or going to heaven (and we have too many such parishes in remote parts of the kingdom) would it not be infinitely better for society if an honest enthusiast could convert these people to piety and morality, though it were effected by spiritualizing all the flanks and kidnies, and bullocks and red cows mentioned in scripture? Any thing of religion is better than debauchery and blasphemy.

Such a set of converts would grow in time up to majority, and when of age would look back on their first religious nourishment as men do on the amusements of their childhood: and among other reformations would cleanse public instruction from Jewish allegory, pagan philosophy, and the gaudy tinsel of the schools. From a state of gross ignorance and vice up to a state of the highest perfection of christian knowledge and virtue lie infinite degrees of improvement, one above another in a scale of excellence up to *the first born of every creature*, the perfect teacher sent from God. In this scale our author occupies a high place in my eye, and if the reader chooses to place him a few degrees lower, I shall not contend about that; for on my principles if he contribute in any, even in the least degree to the cause of truth and virtue, he is a foreigner worth our acquaintance, and the gallic in his appearance will not disgust a friend to the best interests of mankind. I say nothing of the *translation:* it does not become me. Let those who are able do better. Envy of this kind I have none.

The

The following is the prayer, which Mr. Saurin generally used immediately before Sermon.

O LORD! Our God and Father! thou seest us prostrate in thy presence to render the homage due to thy Majesty, to confess our sins to thee, and to implore thy favour. Had we followed the first emotions of our consciences, we should not have presumed to lift our eyes to heaven, but should have fled from thy sight. We are creatures mean and infirm, a thousand times more unworthy of appearing before thee for our depravity, than for our natural meanness. But, O Lord! though our sins and miseries depress us, yet thy mercy lifts us up. Thou art a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in goodness; thou hast no pleasure in the death of a sinner; but that he should repent and live, and thou has given thy Son to the world, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life. So many benefits, so many promises encourage our trembling consciences, and inspire us with the liberty we now take to approach the throne of thy mercy, and to implore the powerful aid of thy grace. We have always need of thine assistance: but now, O Lord, we feel a more than usual want. We are assembled in thy house to learn the doctrines of our salvation, and the rules of our conduct: but, O God! our duty suppasses our strength, we cannot succeed without thy holy Spirit. Grant a double portion of this to us who preach thy word; grant, after we have understood thine oracles, we may be first affected with the truths they contain, before we propose them to others, and may we anounce them in a manner suitable to their excellence. But suffer us not to labour in vain; dispose our hearers to receive thine orders with submission, and to practise them with punctuality; so that all of us, being animated with one spirit, and aiming at one end, may sanctify our conduct, and live agreeably to the holiness of our calling. We pray for all these blessings in the name of thy well beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Our Father, &c.*

The following is the approbation of the Walloon church at Dort, employed by the Synod of Utrecht to examine the Sermons of Mr. Saurin.

WE have found nothing in all these sermons contrary to the doctrine received among us. We have remarked every where a manly eloquence, a close reasoning, an imagination lively and proper to establish the truths of our holy religion, and to explain substantially and elegantly the duties of morality. Accordingly we believe they will effectually contribute to edify the church, and to render more and more respectable the memory of this worthy servant of God, whose death the examination of his works hath given us fresh occasion to lament. We attest this to the venerable Synod at Utrecht. In the same sentiments we send the present attestation to our most dear brother Mr Dumont pastor and professor at Rotterdam, whom the late Mr. Saurin appointed by his will to take the charge of publishing such of his works as were fit for the press. Done at the Consistory of the Walloon church at Dort, May 20, 1731, and signed by order of all by

H. G. Certon, *Pastor.*

J. Comperat, *Pastor.*

Adrian Braets Jacobz, *Elder.*
John Backris, *Elder.*
John Van Breda, *Deacon.*
Simon Taay Van Campen, *Deacon.*

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SERMON

SERMON I.

THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF A BAD EDUCATION.

I. Sam. iii. 12, 13.

In that day, I will perform against Eli, all things *which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

THESE words are part of a discourse, which God addressed to young Samuel in a vision, the whole history of which is well known to us all. We intend to fix our chief attention on the misery of a parent, who neglects the education of his children: but before we consider the subject in this point of view, we will make three remarks tending to elucidate the history. The crimes of the sons of Eli, the indulgence of the unhappy father, and the punishment of that indulgence demand our attention.

Observe *the crimes of the sons of Eli.* They supported their debaucheries by the victims, which the people brought to the tabernacle to be offered in sacrifice. The law assigned them the shoulders and the breasts of all the beasts sacrificed for peace offerings: but not content with these, they seized the portions, which God had appointed to such as brought the offerings, and which he had commanded them to eat in his presence to signify their communion with him. They drew these portions with flesh-hooks out of the caldrons, in which they were boiling. Sometimes they took them raw, that they might have an opportunity of preparing them to their taste; and thus by serving themselves before

fore God they discovered a contempt for those just and charitable ends, which God had in view, when he ordained that his ministers should live on a part of the sacrifices. God, by providing a table for the priests in his own house, intended to make it appear, that they had the honour of being his domestics, and, so to speak, that they lived on his revenue. This was a benevolent design. God also, by appointing the priests to eat after they had sacrificed, intended to make them understand, that he was their sovereign, and the principal object of all the ceremonies performed in his palace. These were just views.

The excesses of the table generally prepare the way for debauchery; and the sons of Eli having admitted the first had fallen into the last, so that they abused *the women, that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*, chap. ii. 22. and to such a degree had they carried these enormities that the people, who had been used to frequent the holy place only for the purpose of rendering homage to Almighty God, were drawn thither by the abominable desire of gratifying the inclinations of his unworthy ministers. Such were the crimes of the sons of Eli.

Let us observe next *the indulgence of the parent.* He did not wholly neglect to correct his sons, for the reproofs he gave them are recorded in the second chapter. *Why do ye such thing?* said he to them, *for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Do not so my sons, for it is no good report that I hear.* To perform a duty of such importance with so much indifference was equal to an encouragement of the sin. Eli made use of petitions and exhortations, when he ought to have applied sharp reproofs, and alarming threatenings. He censured and rebuked, when he ought to have anathematised and thundered: accordingly, after the holy Spirit had related the reproofs, which Eli, in the words just now cited, addressed to his sons, he tells us in the text, by a seeming contradiction, but in words full of truth and good sense, that Eli *restrained them not.*

Observe thirdly what *terrible punishments* this criminal indulgence drew down upon the guilty father, the profligate sons, and even the whole people under their direction. A prophet had before denounced these judgments against Eli, in order to engage him to prevent the repetition of the crimes, and the infliction of the punishments. *Wherefore honourest thou thy sons above me?* said the man of God.

I said

I said, indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever; but behold the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart. And this shall be a sign unto thee, thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas in one day shall both of them die, chap. ii. 29, &c.

These threatenings were accomplished in all their rigour. The *arm* is in scripture an emblem of strength, and when the prophet threatened Eli, that the Lord would cut off his *arm*, and the arm of his father's house, he meant to foretel that the family of this priest should fall into decay. Hophni and Phinehas perished in battle when the Philistians conquered the Israelities. Ahitub and Ichabod, the sons of Phinehas, lived only a few years after the death of their father. If we believe a tradition of the Jews, this threatening was accomplished many ages after it was uttered. We are told in the Talmud, that there was at Jerusalem a family, in which no one outlived the eighteenth year of his age; and that a famous Rabbi found by enquiring into the origin of that family, that it descended from Eli. A rival, Zadok, was made high priest instead of Abiathar, a descendant of Eli. We are able to prove by very exact registers that the high priest continued in the family of Zadok not only from the building of the temple to the destruction of it, that is to say for the space of four hundred years, but even to the time of Antiochus and Epiphanes. The rest of the misfortunes of Eli, the victory obtained by the Philistians, the taking of the ark, the confusion which brought on the labour and the death of the wife of Phinehas, who expired *saying, name the child Ichabod, for the glory is departed from Israel,* chap. iv. 19, &c. the violent death of Eli; all these events are fully known.

I hasten to the chief design of this discourse. The extreme rigour, which God used toward Eli, and the terrible judgments, with which he punished the indulgence of this unhappy parent seem to offend some, who have not attended to the great guilt of a parent, who neglects to devote his children to God by a holy education. I am going to endeavour to remove this offence, and, in order to do so, I shall not confine myself to my text, but shall treat of the

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subject at large, and shew you, as our time will allow, first; the crimes and miseries of a parent, who neglects the education of his family; and secondly, the means of preventing them. We will direct our reflections so that they may instruct not only heads of families, but all our hearers, and so that what we shall say on the education of children, by calling to mind the faults committed in our own, may enable us to correct them.

To neglect the education of our children, is to be *ungrateful to God*, whose wonderful power, created and preserved them. With what marvellous care doth a kind providence watch over the formation of our infants, and adjust all the different parts of their bodies?

With what marvellous care doth a kind providence provide for their first wants: for at first they are like those idols, of which a prophet speaks, *they have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not, they have feet and cannot walk.* Frail, infirm, and incapable of providing for their wants, they find a sufficient supply in those feelings of humanity and tenderness, with which nature inspires all human kind. Who can help admiring that, at a time when infants have nothing that can please, God enables them to move the compassion of their parents, and to call them to their succour by a language more eloquent and more pathetic than the best studied discourses?

With what marvellous care doth a kind providence preserve them amidst a multitude of accidents, which seem to conspire together to snatch them away in their tenderest infancy, and in all their succeeding years? Who but a being Almighty and all-merciful could preserve a machine so brittle, at a time when the least shock would be sufficient to destroy it?

With what astonishing care doth a kind providence provide for those wants, which old age incapacitates us to supply? Who can shut his eyes against all these wonders without sinking into the deepest stupidity, and without exposing himself to the greatest misery.

To neglect the education of our children is *to refuse to retrench that depravity*, which he communicated to them. Suppose the scriptures had not spoken expressly on the subject of original depravity, yet it would argue great stupidity to question it. As soon as infants discover any signs of reason, they discover signs of depravity, and their malice appears as their ideas unfold themselves. Sin in them is a fire

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at first concealed, next emitting a few sparks, and at last bursting into a great blaze, unless it be prevented in time. Whence do they derive so great an infection? Can we doubt it, my brethren? They derive it from us, and by communicating our nature we communicate our depravity. It is impossible, being our children, that they should not be depraved, as we are, for, to use the language of scripture, their *fathers are Amorites and their mothers are Hittites*, Ezek. xvi. 13. Here I wish I could give you some notion of this mortifying mystery; I wish I could remove the difficulties, which prevent your seeing it; I wish I could shew you what a union there is between the brain of an infant and that of its mother, in order to convince you that sin passes from the parent to the child.

What! can we in cool blood behold our children in an abyss, into which we have plunged them; can we be sensible that we have done this evil, and not endeavour to relieve them? Not being able to make them innocent, shall we not endeavour to render them penitent? Ah! victims of my depravity, unhappy heirs of the crimes of your parents, innocent creatures born only to suffer, methinks, I ought to reproach myself for all the pains you feel, all the tears you shed, and all the sighs you utter. Methinks, every time you cry, you reprove me for my insensibility and injustice. At least, it is right, that, as I acknowledge myself the cause of the evil, I should employ myself in repairing it, and endeavour to renew your nature by endeavouring to renew my own.

This reflection leads us to a third. To neglect the education of our children is to be *wanting in* that *tenderness*, which is so much their due. What can we do for them? What inheritance can we transmit to them? Titles? They are often nothing but empty sounds without meaning and reality. Riches? They often *make themselves wings, and fly away*, Prov. xxiii. 5. Honours? They are often mixed with disagreeable circumstances, which poison all the pleasure. It is a religious education, piety and the fear of God, that makes the fairest inheritance, the noblest succession, that we can leave our families.

If any worldly care may lawfully occupy the mind of a dying parent, when in his last moments the soul seems to be called to detach itself from every worldly concern, and to think of nothing but eternity, it is that, which hath our children for its object. A christian in such circumstances

finds his heart divided between the family, which he is leaving in the world, and the holy relations, which he is going to meet in heaven. He feels himself pressed by turns between a desire to die, which is most advantageous for him, and a wish to live, which seems most beneficial to his family. He says, *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*, Phil. i. 23, 24. We are terrified at that crowd of dangers, in which we leave these dear parts of ourselves. The perils seem to magnify as we retire from the sight of them. One while we fear for their health, another while we tremble for their salvation. My brethren, can you think of any thing more proper to prevent or to pacify, such emotions than the practice of that duty, which we are now pressing as absolutely necessary? A good father on his death-bed puts on the same dispositions to his children as Jesus Christ adorned himself with in regard to his disciples immediately before the consummation of that great sacrifice, which he was about to offer to the justice of his Father. The soul of our divine Saviour was affected with the dangers, to which his dear disciples were going to be exposed. Against these gloomy thoughts he opposed two noble reflections. First, he remembered the care, which he had taken of them, and the great principles, which he had formed in their minds; and secondly, he observed that *shadow of the Almighty, under which he had taught them to abide*, Psal. xci. 1. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*, John xvii. 6. 12. 16. This is the first reflection. *Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those, whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am*, ver. 11. 15. 17. This is the second reflection.

These two reflections are impenetrable shields, and a parent should never separate them. Would you be in a condition to oppose the second of these shields against such attacks as the gloomy thoughts just now mentioned will make upon

upon your hearts on that day, in which you quit the world and leave your children in it? endeavour now to arm yourself with the first. Would you have them *abide under the shadow of the Almighty?* inculcate his fear and his love in their hearts. Would you be able to say as Jesus Christ did, *holy Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me, that they may behold thy glory; keep them through thy name?* put yourself now into a condition to enable you then to say to God as Christ did, *I have given them thy word, they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.*

To neglect the education of our children is to let loose madmen against the *state*, instead of furnishing it with good rulers or good subjects. That child intended for the church, what will he become, if he be not animated with such a spirit as ought to enliven a minister of religion? He will turn out a trader in sacred things, and prove himself a spy in our families, a fomenter of faction in the state, who under pretence of glorifying God, will set the world on fire. That other child intended for the bar, what will he become, unless as much pains be taken to engage him to love justice as to make him know it, or to make him not disguise it as well as understand it? He will prove himself an incendiary who will sow seeds of division in families, render law-suits eternal, and reduce to indigence and beggary even those clients, whose causes he shall have art enough to gain. And that child, whom you have rashly determined to push into the highest offices of state without forming in him such dispositions as are necessary to eminent posts, what will he become? A foolish or a partial judge, who will pronounce on the fortunes and lives of his fellow citizens just as chance or caprice may impel him: a public blood-sucker, who will live upon the blood and substance of those whom he ought to support; a tyrant, who will rase and depopulate the very cities and provinces, which he ought to defend.

The least indulgence of the bad inclinations of children sometimes produces the most fatal effects in society. This is exemplified in the life of David, whose memory may truly be reproached on this article, for he was one of the most weak of all parents. Observe his indulgence of Amnon. It produced incest. Remark his indulgence of Absalom, who besought him to allow his brethren to partake of a feast, which he had prepared. It produced an assassination. See his weak fondness of the same Absalom, who endeavoured

to make his way to the throne by mean and clownish manners, affecting to shake hands with the Israelites and to embrace and kiss them (these are the terms of scripture,) and practising all such popular airs as generally precede and predict sedition. This produced a civil war. Remark how he indulged Adonijah, who made himself chariots, and set up a retinue of fifty men. The sacred historian tells us, that *his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so?* 1 Kings i. 6. This produced an an usurpation of the throne and the crown.

To neglect the education of your children is to furnish them with arms against *yourselves.* You complain that the children, whom you have brought up with so much tenderness, are the torment of your life, that they seem to reproach you for living so long, and that, though they have derived their being and support from you, yet they refuse to contribute the least part of their superfluities to assist and comfort you. You ought to find fault with yourselves, for their depravity is a natural consequence of such principles as you have taught them. Had you accustomed them to respect order, they would not now refuse to conform to order: but they would perform the greatest of all duties? they would be the strength of your weakness, the vigour of your reason, and the joy of your old age.

To neglect the education of children is to prepare torments for a *future state,* the bare apprehension of which must give extreme pain to every heart capable of feeling. It is beyond a doubt, that remorse is one of the chief punishments of the damned, and who can question, whether the most excruciating remorse will be excited by this thought; I have plunged my children into this abyss, into which I have plunged myself?

Imagine a parent of a family discovering among the crowd of reprobates a son, whom he himself led thither, and who addresses to him this terrible language, "Barbarous father, what animal appetites, or what worldly views inclined you to give me existence, to what a desperate condition have you reduced me? See, wretch that you are, see these flames, which burn and consume me. Observe this thick smoke which suffocates me. Behold the heavy chains, with which I am loaded down. These are the fatal consequences of the principles you gave me. Was it not enough to bring me into the world a sinner, was it necessary to put me in arms against Almighty God? Was it not enough to communicate

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to me natural depravity, must you add to that the venom of a pernicious education? Was it not enough to expose me to the misfortunes inseparable from life, must you plunge me into those, which follow death? Return me, cruel parent, return me to nothing, whence you took me. Take from me the fatal existence you gave me. Shew me mountains and hills to fall on me, and hide me from the anger of my judge: or, if that divine vengeance, which pursues thee, will not enable thee to do so, I myself will become thy tormentor; I will for ever present myself, a frightful spectacle, before thine eyes, and by those eternal howlings, which I will incessantly pour into thine ears, I will reproach thee, through all eternity I will reproach thee with my misery and despair."

Let us turn our eyes from these gloomy images, let us observe objects more worthy of the majesty of this place, and the holiness of our ministry. To refuse to dedicate our children to God by a religious education, is to refuse those *everlasting pleasures*, which as much surpass our thoughts as our expressions.

It is a famous question in the schools, whether we shall remember in heaven the connections we had in this world? Whether glorified spirits shall know one another? Whether a father will recollect his son, or a son his father? And so on. I will venture to affirm, that they, who have taken the affirmative side, and they, who have taken the negative on this question, have often done so without any reason.

On the one side, the first have pretended to establish their thesis on this principle that something would be wanting to our happiness, if we were not to know in a future state those persons, with whom we had been united by the tenderest connections in this present world.

On the other hand, if we know, say the partizans of the opposite opinion, the condition of our friends in a future state, how will it be possible, that a parent should be happy in the possession of a heaven, in which his children have no share; and how can he possibly relish pleasure at the right hand of God, while he revolves this dreadful thought in his mind, my children are now, and will for ever be tormented with the devil?

It should seem, the proof and the objection are equally groundless. The enjoyment of God is so sufficient to satiate a soul, that it cannot be considered as necessary to the happiness

piness of it to renew such connections as were formed during a momentary passage through this world. I oppose this against the argument for the first opinion: and I oppose the same against the objection, for the enjoyment of God is every way so sufficient to satiate a soul, that it can love nothing but in God, and that its felicity cannot be altered by the miseries of those, with whom there will then be no connection.

A consideration of another kind has always made me incline to the opinion of those who take the affirmative side of this question. The perfections of God are here concealed under innumerable veils. How often does he seem to countenance iniquity by granting a profusion of favours to the contrivers of the most infernal schemes? How often doth he seem to declare himself against innocence by the misfortunes, which he leaves the innocent to suffer? How often have we seen tyrants on a throne, and good people in irons? Doth not this awful phœnomenon furnish us with an irrefragable argument for the doctrine of a general judgment and a future state? Which of your preachers hath not frequently exhorted you to *judge nothing before the time*, 1 Cor. iv. 5. at the end of time cometh *the restitution of all things*, Acts iii. 21. which will justify providence?

Now, it should seem, this argument, which none but infidels and libertines deny, and which is generally received by all christians, and by all philosophers, this argument, I say, favours, not to say establishes in an incontestible manner, the opinion of those, who think, that the saints will know one another in the next life. Without this how could we acquiesce in the justice of the sentence, which will then be pronounced on all? Observe St. Paul, whose ministry was continually counteracted. What motive supported him under so much opposition? Certainly it was the expectation of seeing one day with his own eyes the conquests, which he obtained for Jesus Christ; souls which he had plucked out of the jaws of satan; believers whom he had guided to eternal happiness. Hear what he said to the Thessalonians, *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy*, chap. ii. 19, 20.

Now, this is the *hope*, this is the *crown*, which I propose to you, heads of families, to engage you to dedicate your children to God by a religious education.

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It was this thought, which supported one of the wisest of the heathens against the fears of death, I mean Cato of Utica. No man had a greater affection for a son, that he had for his. No man bore the loss with greater firmness and magnanimity. "O happy day, when I shall quit this wretched crowd, and join that divine and happy company of noble souls, who have quitted the world before me! I shall there meet not only these illustrious personages, but my dear Cato, who, I will venture to say, was one of the best of men, of the best natural dispositions, and the most punctual in the discharge of his duties, that ever was. I have put his body on the funeral pile, whereas he should have placed mine there: but his soul hath not left me, and he hath only stepped first into a country where I shall soon join him."

If this hope made so great an impression on the mind of a pagan, what ought it not to produce in the heart of a christian? What infinite pleasure, when the voice shall cry, *Arise ye dead*, to see those children whom God gave you? What superior delight, to behold those whom an immature death snatched from us, and the loss of whom cost us so many tears? What supreme satisfaction, to embrace those, who closed our eyes, and performed the last kind offices for us? O the unspeakable joy of that christian father, who shall walk at the head of a chrisian family, and present himself with all his happy train before Jesus Christ, offering to him hearts worthy to serve such a master, and saying to him, *behold me, and the children which God hath given me*, Heb. ii. 13.

We have been speaking of the fatal consequences of an irreligious education; and now we wish we could put you all into a condition to prevent them. But, alas! how can some of you reduce our exhortations to practice? you disconsolate fathers, you distressed mothers, from whom persecution has torn away these dear parts of yourselves, ye weeping Davids, ye mourning Rachels, who, indeed, do not weep because your children *are not*, but because, though they are, and though you gave them existence, you cannot give them a religious education? Ah! how can you obey our voice? Who can calm the cruel fears, which by turns divide your souls? What results from all the conflicts, which pass within you, and which rend your hearts asunder? Will you go and expose yourselves to persecution? Will you leave your children alone to be persecuted? Will you obey the voice that commands, *flee out of Babylon, and*

and deliver every man his own soul, Jer. l. 6. or that which cries, *Take the young child?* Mat. ii. 20. O dreadful alternative! Must you be driven, in some sort, to make an option between their salvation and yours, must you sacrifice yours to theirs, or theirs to your own?

Ah! cruel problem!—Inhuman suspence! Thou tyrant, is not thy rage sufficiently glutted by destroying our material temples, must you lay your barbarous hands on the temples of the holy Ghost? Is it not enough to plunder us of our property, must you rob us of our families? Is it not enough to render life bitter,—would you make eternity desperate and intolerable?

But, it is not to tyrants that we would address ourselves, they are inaccessible to our voice, or inflexible to our complaints. It is to God alone, who turns them as he thinks proper, that we address our prayers. Hagar found herself banished into a desert, and she had nothing to support her but a few pieces of bread and a bottle of water. The water being spent, her dear Ishmael was ready to die with thirst. She laid him under a bush, and only desired that she might not see him die. She rambled to some distance, wept as she went, and said, *Let me not see the death of the child*, Gen. xxi. 16, &c. See, she cannot help it, she sits *over against him, lifts up her voice, and weeps.* God heard the voice of the mother and the child, and, by an angel, said unto her, *what aileth thee Hagar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad. Arise, take hold of his hand, and lift him up, for I will make him a great nation.* See what a source of consolation I open to you! Lift up the voice and weep. *O Father of spirits, God of the spirits of all flesh*, Heb. xii. 9. Num. xvi. 22. Thou Supreme, whose essence is love, and whose chief character is mercy, thou who wast touched to see Nineveh repent, and who wouldst not involve in the general destruction the many infants at nurse in that city, *who could not discern between their right hand and their left*, John iv. 11. wilt thou not regard with eyes of affection and pity our numerous children, who cannot discern truth from error, who cannot *believe*, because *they have not heard*, who cannot *hear without a preacher*, and to whom, alas! no preacher is *sent?*—Rom. x. 14.

But you happy fathers, you, mothers, favourites of heaven, who assemble your children around you, *as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, Matt. xxiii. 37.

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can you neglect a duty, which is impracticable to others? That tyrants and persecutors should display their fury by making havock of our children, and by offering them to the devil, is, I allow, extremely shocking, but there is nothing in it very wonderful: but that christian fathers and mothers should conspire together in such a tragical design would be a spectacle incomparably more shocking, and the horror of which the blackest colours are unable to pourtray.

How forcible soever the motives, which we have alleged, may be, I fear they will be ineffectual, and such as will not influence the greatset part of you. It must be allowed, that, if there be any case, to which the words of our Saviour are applicable, it is this of which we are speaking, *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*, Matt. vii. 14.

A reformation of the false ideas, which you form on the education of children, is, so to speak, the first step, which you ought to take in the road set before you this day. No, it is not such vague instructious as you give your children, such superficial pains as you take to make them virtuous, such general exhortations as you address to them, it is not all this, that constitutes such a religious education as God requires you to give them. Entertain notions more rational, and remember the few *maxims*, which I am going to propose to you as the conclusion of this discourse.

First maxim. Delays, always dangerous in cases of practical religion, are peculiarly fatal in the case of education. As soon as children see the light, and begin to think and reason, we should endeavour to form them to piety. Let us place the fear of God in these young hearts, before the world can get possession of them, before the power of habit be united to that of constitution. Let us avail ourselves of the flexibility of their organs, the fidelity of their memories, and the facility of their conceptions, to render their duty pleasing to them by the ease with which they are taught to discharge it.

Second maxim. Although the end of the divers methods of educating children ought to be the same, yet it should be varied according to their different characters. Let us study our children with as much application as we have studied ourselves. Both these studies are attended with difficulties: and as self love often prevents our know-

ing ourselves, so a natural fondness for our children renders it extremely difficult for us to discover their propensities.

Third maxim. A procedure, wise in itself, and proper to inspire children with virtue, may sometimes be rendered useless by symptoms of passions, with which it is accompanied. We cannot educate them well without a prudent mixture of severity and gentleness. But on the one hand, what success can we expect from gentleness, if they discover that it is not the fruit of our care to reward what in them is worthy of reward, but of a natural inclination, which we have not the courage to resist, and which makes us yield more to the motions of our animal machine, than to the dictates of reason? On the other hand, what good can they derive from our severity, if they see, that it proceeds from humour and caprice more than from our hatred to sin, and our desire to free them from it? If our eyes sparkle, if we take a high tone of voice, if our mouths froth, when we chastize them, what good can come of such chastisements?

Fourth maxim. The best means of procuring a good education lose all their force, unless they be supported by the examples of such as employ them. Example is always a great motive, and it is especially such to youth. Children know how to imitate before they can speak, before they can reason, and, so to speak, before they are born. In their mother's wombs, at the breasts of their nurses, they receive impressions from exterior objects, and take the form of all that strikes them. What success, miserable mother, can you expect from your exhortations to piety, while your children see you yourself all taken up with the world, and its amusements and pleasures; passing a great part of your life in gaming, and in forming criminal intrigues, which, far from hiding from your family, you expose to the sight of all mankind? What success can you expect from your exhortations to your children, you wretched father, when they hear you blaspheme your Creator, and see you living in debauchery, drowning your reason in wine, and gluttony, and so on?

Fifth maxim. A liberty, innocent when it is taken before men, becomes criminal, when it is taken before tender minds, not yet formed. What circumspection, what vigilance, I had almost said, what niceties doth this maxim engage us to observe? Certain words spoken, as it were,

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into the air, certain imperceptible allusions, certain smiles, escaping before a child, and which he hath not been taught to suspect, are sometimes snares more fatal to his innocence than the most profane discourses, yea they are often more dangerous than the most pernicious examples, for them he hath been taught to abhor.

Sixth maxim. The indefatigable pains which we ought always to take in educating our children, ought to be redoubled on these decisive events, which influence both the present life, and the future state. For example, the *kind of life*, to which we devote them, is one of these decisive events. A good father regulates his views in this respect, not according to a rash determination made when the child was in the cradle, but according to observations deliberately made on the abilities and manners of the child.

Companions too are to be considered as deciding on the future condition of a child. A good father with this view will choose such societies as will second his own endeavours, he will remember the maxim of St. Paul, *Evil communications corrupt good manners*, 1 Cor. xv. 33. for he knows, that a dissolute companion hath often eradicated from the heart of a youth all the good seeds, which a pious family had sown there.

Above all, *marriage* is one of these decisive steps in life. A good father of a family, unites his children to others by the two bonds of virtue and religion. How can an intimate union be formed with a person of impious principles, without familiarizing the virtuous by degrees with impiety, without losing by little and little that horror, which impiety would inspire, and without imbibing by degrees the same spirit? So necessary is a bond of virtue. That of religion is no less so, for the crime, which drew the most cutting reproofs upon the Israelites after the captivity, and which brought upon them the greatest judgments, was that of contracting marriages with women not in the covenant. Are such marriages less odious now, when by a profane mixture, people unite *light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and idols?* 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Are such marriages less hateful now, when, by a horrible partition, the children, if there be any, are mutually ceded before hand, and in cool blood disposed of thus, the sons shall be taught the truth, the daughters shall be educated in error, the boys shall be for heaven, the girls for hell, a son for God, a daughter for the devil.

Seventh maxim. The best means for the education of children must be accompanied with fervent prayer. If you have paid any attention to the maxims we have proposed, I shall not be surprised to hear you exclaim, *Who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. ii. 16. But, if it be the fear of not succeeding in educating your children, which dictates this language, and not that indolence, which tries to get rid of the labour, be you fully persuaded, that the grace of God will triumph over your great infirmities. Let us address to him the most fervent prayers for the happiness of those children, who are so dear to us, and let us believe that they will return in benedictions upon them. Let each parent collect together all his piety, and then let him give himself up to the tenderest emotions towards his children. O God! who didst present thyself to us last Lord's days, under the amiable idea of a parent, *pitying them that fear thee as a father pitieth his children**, Psal. ciii. 13. O God! who thyself lovest thy Son with infinite tendernes and vehemence: O God! author of the tender affections, which unite me to the children thou hast given me, bless the pains I take in their education: disobedient children, my God, I disown: let me see them die in infancy, rather than go along with the torrent of general immorality, and *run*, with the children of the world to their *excess of riot*, 1 Pet. iv. 4. I pray for their sanctification with an ardour a thousand times more vehement than I desire their fortune: and the first of all my wishes is to be able to present them to thee on that great day, when thou wilt pronounce the doom of all mankind, and to say to thee then, *Lord, behold, here am I, and the children thou hast given me.* May God excite such prayers, and answer them! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

* See the seventh Sermon of the first Volume.

SERMON

SERMON II.

GENERAL MISTAKES.

ROM. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world.

OF all the discourses delivered in this pulpit, those, which deserve the greatest deference, and usually obtain the least, are such as treat of general mistakes. What subjects require greater deference? Our design in treating of them is to dissipate those illusions, with which the whole world is familiar, which are authorized by the multitude, and which like epidemical diseases, inflicted sometimes by providence on public bodies, involve the state, the church, and individuals. Yet are any discourses less respected than such as these? To attack general mistakes is to excite the displeasure of all who favour them, to disgust a whole auditory, and to acquire the most odious of all titles, I mean that of public censor. A preacher is then obliged to choose, either never to attack such mistakes as the multitude think fit to authorize, or to renounce the advantages, which he may promise himself, if he adapt his subjects to the taste of his auditors, and touch their disorders only so far as to accomodate their crimes to their consciences.

Let us not hesitate what part to take. St. Paul determines us by his example. I am going to day, in imitation of this apostle, to guard you against the rocks, where the many are shipwrecked. He exhorts us, in the words of the text, not to take *the world* for a model; *the world*, that is the crowd, the multitude, society at large. But what society hath he in view? Is it that of ancient Rome, which he describes as extremely depraved in the beginning of this epistle? Does he say nothing of our world, our cities and provinces? We are going to examine this, and I fear I shall

shall be able to prove to you, that our multitude is a dangerous guide to shew us the way to heaven; and, to confine ourselves to a few articles, I shall prove that they are bad guides to direct us, first, in regard to faith,—secondly, in regard to the worship which God requires of us;—thirdly, in regard to morality;—and lastly, in regard to the hour of death. In these four views I shall enforce the words of my text, *Be not conformed to this world.* This is the whole plan of this discourse.

I. The multitude is a bad guide to direct our *faith.* We will not introduce here the famous controversy on this question, whether a great number form a presumption in favour of any religion, or whether universality be a certain evidence of the true christian church? How often has this question been debated and determined! How often have we proved against one community, which displays the number of its professors with so much parade, that, if the pretence were well founded, it would operate in favour of paganism, for pagans were always more numerous than christians! How often have we told them, that in divers periods of the ancient church idolatry and idolaters have been enthroned in both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel! How often have we alleged, that in the time of Jesus Christ the church was described as a *little flock*, Luke xii. 32. that heathens and Jews were all in league against christianity at first, and that the gospel had only a small number of disciples! How often have we retorted, that for whole centuries there was no trace, no shadow of the opinions of modern Rome! But we will not apply ourselves to this controversy to day by fixing your attention on the sophisms of foreigners, perhaps we might divert your eyes from your own; by shewing you our triumphs over the vain attacks made on us by the enemies of the reformation, perhaps we might turn away your attention from other more dangerous wounds, which the reformed themselves aim at the heart of religion. When I say the multitude is a bad guide in matters of faith, I mean, that the manner, in which most men adhere to truth, is not by principles, which ought to attach them to it, but by a spirit of negligence and prejudice.

It is no small work to examine the truth, when we arrive at an age capable of discussion. The fundamental points of religion, I grant, lie in the scriptures clear and perspicuous, and within the comprehension of all who chuse to attend to them:

them: but when we pass from infancy to manhood, and arrive at an age in which reaon seems mature, we find ourselves covered with a veil, which either hides objects from us, or disfigures them. The public discourses we have heard in favour of the sect, in which we were educated, the inveterate hatred we have for all others, who hold principles opposite to ours, the frightful portraits that are drawn before our eyes of the perils we must encounter, if we depart from the way we have been brought up in, the impressions made upon us by the examples and decisions of our parents, and masters, and teachers, the bad taste of those, who had the care of our education, and who prevented our acquiring that most noble disposition, without which it is impossible ever to be a true philosopher, or a real christian, I mean that of suspending our judgment on subjects not sufficiently proved: from all this arise clouds, that render the truth inaccessible, and which the world cannot dissipate. We do not say, that natural talents or supernatural assistance are wanting; we are fully convinced that God will never give up to final error any man who does all in his power to understand the truth. But the world are incapable of this work. Why? Because all the world, except a few, hate labour and meditation in regard to the subjects, which respect another life; because all the world would choose rather to attach themselves to what regards their temporal interests than to the great interest of eternal happiness: because all the world like better to suppose the principles imbibed in their childhood true, than to impose on themselves the task of weighing them anew in the balance of a sound and severe reason: because all the world have an invincible aversion to suppose, that when they are arrived at manhood they have almost lost their time in some respects, and that when they leave school they begin to be capable of instruction.

If the nature of the thing cannot convince you, that the multitude continue through negligence in the profession of that religion, in which they were born, experience may here supply the place of reasoning, There is an infinite variety of geniusses among mankind. Propose to an assembly a question, that no system hath yet decided, and you will find as it is usually said, as many opinions as heads.

It is certain, if mankind were attached to a religion only becase they had studied it, we should find a great number of people forsake that, in which they had been brought up, for it is impossible, that a whole society should unite in one point

point of error, or rather, it is clear to a demonstration, that as truth hath certain characters superior to falshood, the temples of idols would be instantly deserted, erroneous sects would be soon abandoned, the religion of Jesus Christ, the only one worthy of being embraced, the only one that deserves disciples, would be the only one embraced, and would alone be received by all sincere disciples of truth.

Do not think, my brethren, that this reflection concerning that spirit of negligence, which retains most men in a profession of their own religion, regards only such communions as lay down their own infallibility for a fundamental article of faith, and which prescribe ignorance and blind submission as a first principle to their partizans, for it is but too easy to prove, that the same spirit of negligence reigns in all communities. Hence it comes to pass, that in general so few christians can render a reason for their faith. Hence it is that people are usually better furnished with arguments to oppose such societies as surround them, than with those, which establish the fundamental truths of christianity. If then you follow the direction of the multitude in the study of religion, you will be conducted by a spirit of negligence, prejudice will be held for proof, education for argument, and the decisions of your parents and teachers for infallible oracles of truth.

II. The multitude is a bad guide in regard to that *worship*, which God requireth of us, they defile it with a spirit of superstition. Superstition is a disposition of mind, that inclines us to regulate all parts of divine worship, not by just notions of the Supreme Being, nor by his relations to us, nor by what he has condescended to reveal, but by our own fancies. A superstitious man entertains fantastical ideas of God, and renders to him capricious worship; he not unfrequently takes himself for a model of God; he thinks that what most resembles himself, however mean and contemptible, approaches nearest to perfection. We affirm, this disposition is almost universal.

It would be needless to prove this to you, my brethren, in regard to erroneous communities. Were superstition banished from the world, we should not see men, who are made in the image of God, disgrace their nature by prostrating themselves before idols, and marmosets, so as to render religious honours to half a block of wood or stone, the other half of which they apply to the meanest purposes:

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we should not see a crowd of idolaters performing a ceremonial, in which conviction of mind hath no part, and which is all external and material: we should not see a concourse of people receiving with respect, as the precious blood of the Saviour of the world, a few drops of putrified water, which the warmth of the sun hath produced by fermentation in the trunk of a decayed tree: we should not see pilgrims in procession mangling their flesh in the streets, dragging along heavy loads, howling in the high-ways, and taking such absurd practices for that repentance, which breaks the heart, and transforms and renews the life. You will easily grant all this, for, I have observed, it is often less difficult to inspire you with horror for these practices, than to excite compassion in you for such as perform them.

But you ought to be informed, that there are other superstitions less gross, and therefore more dangerous. Among us we do not put a worship absolutely foreign to the purpose in the place of that, which God hath commanded and exemplified to us, but we make an estimate of the several parts of true worship. These estimates are regulated by opinions formed through prejudice or passion. What best agrees with our inclinations we consider as the essence of religion, and what would thwart and condemn them we think circumstantial.

We make a scruple of not attending a sermon, not keeping a festival, not receiving the Lord's supper, but we make none of neglecting to visit a prisoner, to comfort the sick, or to plead for the oppressed. We observe a strict decency in our religious assemblies while our ministers address prayer to God, but we take no pains to accompany him with our minds and hearts; to unite our ejaculations with his to besiege the throne of grace. We think it a duty to join our voices with those of a whole congregation, and to fill our places of worship with the praises of our Creator, but we do not think ourselves obliged to understand the sense of the psalm, that is sung with so much fervour, and, in the language of an apostle, to *sing with understanding*, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. We lay aside innocent occupations the day before we receive the Lord's supper, but no sooner do we return from that ordinance than we allow the most criminal pleasures, and enter upon the most scandalous intrigues. Who make these mistakes, my brethren? Is it the few? *Be not conformed to this world*, in regard to the worship that God requires of you, the multitude perform it in a spirit of superstition.

III. Neither are the many a better guide in regard to *morality*. Here, my brethren, we are going more particularly to describe that class of mankind, among which we live, and of which we ourselves are a part. Indeed, the portraits we are going to draw will not be flattering to them, for justice requires, that we should describe men as they are, not as they pretend to be. In order to exactness let us consider them separately and apart. First, In regard to the masters who govern them. Secondly, In regard to the professions, which they exercise. Thirdly, In regard to some maxims generally received. Fourthly, In regard to the splendid actions, which they celebrate. And lastly, In regard to certain decisive occasions, that like touchstones discover their principles and motives.

1. Consider mankind in regard to the *masters* who govern them. Here I congratulate myself on the happiness of speaking to a free people, among whom it is not reputed a crime to praise what is praise worthy, and to blame what deserves blame, and where we may freely trace the characters of some men of whom prudence requires us not to *speak evil, no not in thought, no not in the bed chamber, least a bird of the air should carry the voice, and that which hath wings should tell the matter*, Eccles. x. 20. Is it in the palaces of the great that humility reigns, humility which so well becomes creatures, who though crowned and enthroned are yet infirm, criminal, dying creatures, and who in a few days will become food for worms, yea perhaps victims in the flames of hell? Is it in the palaces of the great that uprightness, good faith and sincerity reign, yet without these society is nothing but a banditti, treaties are only snares, and laws cobwebs, which, to use a well known expression, catch only weak insects, while the free and carnivarous break through? Is it in the palaces of the great that gratitude reigns, that lawful tribute due to every motion made to procure our happiness? Is it there that the services of a faithful subject, the labours of an indefatigable merchant, the perils of an intrepid soldiery, blood shed and to be shed, are estimated and rewarded? Is it there that the cries of the wretched are heard, tears of the oppressed wiped away, the claims of truth examined and granted? Is it in the palaces of the great that benevolence reigns, that benevolence without which a man is only a wild beast? Is it there that the *young ravens which cry* are heard and fed? Psal. cxlvii. 9. Is it there that they attend to the bitter

bitter complaints of an indigent man, ready to die with hunger, and who asks for no more than will just keep him alive? Are the palaces of the great seats of piety and devotion? Is it there that schemes are formed for the reformation of manners? Is it there that they are *grieved for the affliction of Joseph*, Amos vi. 6. and *take pleasure in the dust and stones of Zion?* Psal. cii. 14. Is it there that we hear the praises of the Creator, do they celebrate the compassion of the Redeemer of mankind?

What ideas are excited in our minds by the names of such as Caligula, Nero, Dioclesian, Decius, names detestable in all ages? What ideas could we excite in your minds, were we to weigh in a just balance the virtues of such heroes as have been rendered famous by the encomiums given them? You would be astonished to see that these men, who have been called the *delights of mankind*, have often deserved execration, and ought to be considered with horror. But I purposely forbear, and will not put in this list all that ought to be placed there, that is to say, all those who have had sovereign power, except a very few, who in comparison are next to none, and who are, as it were, lost in the crowd among the rest. And yet the elevation of kings makes their crimes more communicable, and their examples more contagious; their sins become a filthy vapour infecting the air, and shedding their malignant influence all over our cities and families, lightning, and thundering, and disturbing the world. Accordingly you see in general, that what the king is in his kingdom, the governor is in his province; what the governor is in his province, the nobleman is in his domain; what the nobleman is in his domain, the master is in his family. The multitude is a bad guide, mankind are a dangerous model, considered in regard to the masters who govern them.

2. Consider the many in regard to divers *professions*. What is the profession of a soldier, particularly of an officer of rank in the army? It is to defend society, to maintain religion, to be a parent to the soldiery, to bridle the licentiousness of arms, to oppose power against injustice, to derive from all the views of death, that lie open before him, motives to prepare his accounts to produce before his judge. But what is the conduct of a soldier? Is it not to brave society? Is it not to trample upon religion? Is it not to set examples of debauchery, licentiousness and vengeance? Is it not to let out his abilites, and to sacrifice his life to the most ambitious designs, and to the most bloody enterprizes of princes? Is it

not to accustom himself to ideas of death and judgment till he laughs at both, to stifle all remorse, and to extirpate all the fears, which such objects naturally excite in the consciences of other men?

What is the profession of a judge? It is to have no regard to the appearances of men, it is to be affable to all, who appeal to authority, to study with application the nature of a cause, which he is obliged to decide, it is patiently to go through the most fatiguing details of proofs and objections. But what is often the conduct of a judge? Is it not to be struck with the exterior difference of two parties appearing before him? Is it not to be inaccessible to the poor, to invent cruel reserves, and intolerable delays? Is it not to grovel in ignorance, and to hate study and labour.

What is the profession of a man learned in the law? It is to devote his service only to truth and justice, to plead only a good cause, to assist even those, who cannot reward his labours. What is the conduct of counsel? Is it not to support both the true and the false, and to maintain by turns both justice and iniquity? Is it not to adjust his efforts to his own glory, or to his clients ability to pay?

What is the profession of a merchant? It is to detest false weights and measures, to pay his dues, and never to found his fortune on falsehood, fraud and perjury. But what is the conduct of a merchant? Is it not to use false weights and measures? Is it not to cheat the state of its dues? Is it not to indulge an insatiable avidity? Is it not to enrich himself by telling untruths, by practising frauds, by taking false oaths?

What is the profession of a minister? It is to devote himself wholly to truth and virtue, to set the whole church an example, to search into hospitals, and cottages, to relieve the miseries of the sick and the poor; it is to determine himself in his studies, not by what will acquire him reputation for learning and eloquence, but by what will be most useful to the people, over whom he is set; it is to regulate his choice of subjects, not by what will make himself shine, but by what will most benefit the people among whom he exercises his ministry; it is to take as much care of a dying person in an obscure family, lying on a bed of straw, lost in oblivion and silence, as of him, who with an illustrious name lives amidst silver and gold, and for whom the most magnificent and pompous funeral honours will be prepared, it is to *cry aloud, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and shew the people*

people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins, Isa. lviii. 1. Mic. iii. 8. and 2 Cor. v. 16. *it is to know no man after the flesh* when he ascends the pulpit, boldly to reprove vice, how eminent soever the seat of it may be. What is the usual conduct of a minister?—O God! *Enter not into judgment with thy servants, for we cannot answer one* complaint *of a thousand!* Psal. cxliii. 2. Job ix. 3.

3. Consider the multitude in regard to some general *maxims*, which they adopt, and hold as rules and approved axioms. Have you read in the gospel the following maxims? Charity begins at home. Youth is a time of pleasure. It is allowable to kill time. We should not pretend to be saints. Slander is the salt of conversation. We must do as other people do. It is unworthy of a man of honour to put up an affront. A gentleman ought to avenge himself. Ambition is the vice of great souls. Provided we commit no great crimes, we sufficiently answer our calling. Impurity is an intolerable vice in a woman, but it is pardonable in a man. It would be easy to enlarge this catalogue. Which of these maxims, pray, doth not sap some of the first principles of the religion of Jesus Christ? Yet which of these maxims is not received in society as a fundamental rule of action, which we should be accounted singular and petulant to condemn?

4. Consider the multitude in regard to certain *actions, on which they lavish praise and write encomiums.* We do not mean to speak at present of such crimes as the depravity of the world sometimes celebrates under the notion of heroical actions. Our reflection is of another kind. It is pretty clear, that depravity is general, and piety in the possession of a very few, when persons of superficial knowledge are praised for the depth of their understanding, and when such as perform very small and inconsiderable actions of virtue are considered as the wonders of the world. Sometimes I hear the world exclaim, what benevolence! What liberality! What generosity! I inquire for the evidences of these virtues, on which such lavish encomiums are bestowed; I expect to find another St. Paul, who *wished himself accursed for his brethren*, Rom. ix. 3. I hope to meet with another Moses, praying to be *blotted out of the book* of life rather than see his nation perish, Exod. xxxii. 32. But no, this boasted generosity and charity is that of a man, who distributed to the poor on one solemn occasion, once in his life, such a sum of money as he expends every day in prodigality and

and superfluity. It is that of a man, who bestow on all the members of Jesus Christ almost as much as he does on the walls of a room, or the harness of a horse. I hear the world exclaim in some circumstances, what friendship! What tenderness! I inquire for this tender, zealous, generous friend. I expect to find such an original as I have seen described in books, though I have never met with such an one in society. I hope at least to see one example of a friend saying to a dying a man, appoint me your executor, and leave me your children to bring up, and your widow to provide for. But no, I find nothing but the friendship of a man, who by improving the fortune of another attracts the chief advantages to himself. I hear the world exclaiming in certain circumstances, what virtue! What purity! What a mother of a family! Again I look for the object of these encomiums. I hope to see such a woman as Solomon imagined, a mother of a family, who makes her house a house of God, and her children patterns of piety. But no, I meet with a woman, who indeed does not defile the nuptial bed, who only doth not outlive her income, and who teaches her children only the little course of domestic œconomy. All these actions are praiseworthy. All these examples ought to be imitated. But is there any ground for exclaiming as if virtue had been carried to its highest pitch? Are these then such great efforts of religion? Alas! My brethren, complete characters must needs be very scarce in the world, since the world is in raptures on account of these imperfect virtues; there must needs be a great dearth of wise men in the world, since there is so much boasting of one man, who takes only one step in the path of wisdom.

5. Consider mankind in regard to certain *decisive occasions*, which like touchstones discover their hearts. We do not know ourselves, we form false ideas of ourselves, when our virtues have not been brought to the test. We imagine, we incline to be patient, clement and charitable, in cases where we are not tried, where neither our fortune, nor our reputation, nor our honour are affected: but the moment a stroke is aimed at any of these the countenance changes, the brain ferments, the mouth foams, and we breathe nothing but hatred and vengeance. Nothing is more common among us than to talk highly of justice, to detest and censure iniquity, and to engage ourselves inviolably to follow such rules of equity as are marked out in the divine law. Let any man bring an action against us, with reason or without,

out, and all these ideas vanish, we instantly become familiar with the very vices, to which we thought we had an invincible aversion. We disguise our cause, we suppress unfavourable circumstances, we impose on our counsel, we try to take even the judges by surprise, we pretend to make great matters of the importance of our rank, the worth of our names, the credit of our familes, the tone of our voices, and all this we wish to incorporate in our cause. A disinterested spirit is always the subject of our utmost admiration and praise. A generous man is the admiration of all mankind, his noble actions unite all hearts, and every man is eager to give such actions their dignity and praise: but no sooner have we a little business to do, in which we have no kind of interest, but disinterestedness appears odious to us, and magnanimity seems to us more proper for a hero of a romance than for a man living and acting in society, and generous actions appear to us mere creatures of imagination. O how little does the multitude deserve consideration in regard to manners!

IV. No more ought they to be imitated in regard to the manner, in which they *quit the world.* Here I foresee, my brethren, you will all side with one another against our doctrine, and that we shall be obliged to blame both persons and things about dying people; such as are dying, such as surround them, such as visit them; in short, all are in disorder in the case before us. Almost every person that dies is canonized. If the light of christianity had not abolished deification, we should have filled heaven with saints and heroes and deified souls. Each house of mourning echoes with the praises of the dead, none of his looks towards heaven are forgotten, not a sigh, not an ejaculation hath escaped notice. The funeral convoys of persons the most worldly, whose hearts had been the most hardened in sin, are all uttering orations in praise of the dead. For our parts, my brethren, we, who have seen a great number of sick people, and attended many in their dying hours, we freely grant, that the salvation of many of them is probable. We have hardly seen one, whose salvation we quite despair: but how seldom have we been inclined to say, while we saw such people expire uttering the language of the most eminent saints in scripture, *Let us die the death of* these *righteous* people, *and let our last end be like* theirs! Numb. xxiii. 10. I will give you a short list of general mistakes on this subject.

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The first mistake is this. Most sick people are ingenious to disguise the danger of their illness. *Be not conformed to this world.* Whenever a dangerous illness attacks you, be aware of your condition, and let each say to himself, I have not long to live; at least this may be my last illness. My brethren, this supposition is never unseasonable, we are in little danger of being deceived by thinking death at hand, for the numberless accidents, to which we are exposed, justify the thought. Is there any thing extravagant, pray, in affirming that sickness added to all these accidents renders the near approach of death highly probable?

The second mistake is this. Most dying people put off the regulation of their temporal affairs too long. *Be not conformed to this world.* You should take patterns from better models both for reasons of affection, and reasons of prudence. True affection to a family engages a man to preclude in favour of his heirs such troubles and divisions as are the inseparable consequences of an undivided or perplexed estate. Prudence, too, will foresee, that while our minds are all occupied about temporal affairs, a thousand ideas will intrude to disturb our devotion. Do not wait till the last moment to settle your affairs, to make your will, to dispose of your family, and be not so weak as to imagine that the discharge of these necessary duties will hasten your death. Employ yourselves wholly about the state of your souls, and let each say to himself, since I have been in the world I have hardly devoted one whole day to devotion: since I have been a member of the church I have been exercised about affairs which interest the whole society: but now that I am come to the end of my life, now I am passing out of this world, now that I am going where I shall have no more *portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun*, disturb me no more, ye worldly ideas; thou *fashion of this world passing away*, appear no more in my sight: ye wild *fowls*, interrupt my sacrifice no more.

The third mistake is this. Most dying people delay sending for their ministers till the last moment. They would have us do violence to the laws of nature, they set us to exhort trunks, to instruct carcases, to prepare skin and bones for eternity. *Be not conformed to this world.* Why should ye delay? Is there any thing odious in our ministry? We do not bring death along with us, we do not hasten its approach: if we denounce the judgments of God against you it is not with a design to terrify you, but to free you from them, and to *pull you out of the fire*, Jude 23. To

To these I add a fourth mistake. Most dying people think it a duty to tell their pastors of excellent sentiments, which indeed they have not, and they are afraid to discover their defects. When death makes his formidable appearance before them, they think religion requires them to say, they are quite willing to die. We *desire*, say they, *to depart*, when, alas! all their desires are to *make a tabernacle* in the world, for *it is good*, they think, *to be there*. They tremble at the coming of Christ, and yet they cry, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*. Ah! *Be not conformed to this world*, open thy heart that it may be known, discover the maladies of thy soul, that we may apply such remedies as are proper. Do not imagine you will acquire such sentiments and emotions as saints of the first order had by talking their language: but imbibe their principles in your mind, and their tempers in your heart, before you make use of their language.

The fifth mistake is this. Most dying people speak to their ministers only in the presence of a great number of attendants, and most attendants interfere in what ministers say on those occasions. *Be not conformed to this world.* Two reasons may convince you of the necessity of being alone. The first regards the pastor. Surrounding attendants divert his attention from the sick person. The second regards the sick person himself. Would it be just or kind to give him directions in public? What! would you have us in the presence of a husband lay open the intrigues of an immodest wife, and endeavour to bring her to repent of her lasciviousness by convicting her of her crimes? Would you have us reprove the head of a family for the iniquity that has disgraced his long life, in the presence of his son? Would you have us exhort a dying man to make restitution of his ill-gotten wealth in the presence of an hungry heir, who already gluts his eyes, and satiates his soul with hopes of succession? Were we casuists after the Roman fashion, did we compel consciences to reveal secrets to us, which ought to be confessed to God alone, did we interfere with your families and properties, there would be some ground for your scruples: but while we desire nothing but to exonerate your consciences, and to awaken your souls to a sense of danger before the be plunged into an abyss of eternal misery, respect our conduct, and condescend to submit to our instruction.

To these I add one mistake more. Most dying people trust too much to their ministers, and take too little pains themselves to form such dispositions as a dying bed requires.

Be not conformed to this world. It is not enough to have external help to die well, we ourselves must concur in this great work, we must by profound meditation, by frequent reflections and by fervent prayers support ourselves under this last attack, and thus put the last hand to the work of our salvation. It is true, the infirmities of your bodies will affect your minds, and will often interrupt your religious exercises; but no matter, God doth not require of a dying person connected meditations, accurate reflections, precise and formal prayers, for one sigh, one tear, one ejaculation of your soul to God, one serious wish rising from the bottom of your heart will be highly esteemed by the Lord, and will draw down new favours upon you.

To conclude. The multitude is a bad guide in regard to faith, in regard to manners, and in regard to departing out of this life. A man who desires to be saved, should be always upon his guard lest he should be rolled down the torrent: he ought to compile in his closet, or rather in his conscience, a religion apart, such as is, not that of the children of the world, but that of the disciples of wisdom. *Be not conformed to this world.*

I finish with two reflections. I address the first to those, who derive from this discourse no consequences to direct their actions: and the second to such as refer it to its true design.

First. I address myself to you who do not draw any consequences from this discourse to regulate your actions. You have seen a portrait of the multitude. I suppose you acknowledge the likeness, and acquiesce in the judgement we have made. It seems, too many proofs and demonstrations establish this proposition, the multitude is a bad guide. Now you may follow which example you please. You may make your choice between the maxims of Jesus Christ and the maxims of the world. But we have a right to require one thing of you, which you cannot refuse us without injustice, that is, that granting the genius of the multitude, when you are told you are destroying yourselves, you do not pretend to have refuted us by replying, we conduct ourselves as the world does, and every body does what you condemn in us. Thanks be to God, your proposition is not strictly true! Thanks be to God, the rule hath some exceptions! There are many regenerate souls, hidden perhaps from the eyes of men, but visible to God. There are even some saints, who shine in the sight of the whole world, and who, to use the expression

expression of Jesus Christ, are a *city set on a hill*, Matt. v. 14. What then, you never cast your eyes on the most illustrious objects in this world! Do you reckon for nothing what alone merits observation in society, and what constitutes the true glory of it? Have you no value for men for whose sake the world subsists, and society is preserved?

However, your proposition is indisputable in a general sense, and we are obliged to allow it, for our whole discourse tends to elucidate and establish the point. Allege this proposition, but do not allege it for the purpose of opposing the censures you have heard, or of getting rid of our reproofs. By answering in this manner you give us an advantage over you, you lay a foundation which you mean to destroy, you do not furnish yourselves with a shield against your ministers, but you yourselves supply them with arms to wound and destroy you. Why do we declaim against your conduct? What do we mean when we reprove your way of living, except to convince you that it is not answerable to the christian character which you bear? What do we mean except that you break the vows made for you in your baptism, and which you yourselves have often ratified at the Lord's table? What, in one word, except that you do not obey the laws of the gospel? But what can you advance more proper to strengthen the testimony which we bear against you than that, which you advance to weaken it, that is, that you live as the world lives.

All the world, say you, conduct themselves as we do, and every body does what you censure us for doing. But all the world conduct themselves badly, all the world violate the spirit of religion, all the world attack the maxims of Jesus Christ, all the world run in the broad road of perdition, all the world are destroying themselves, and the apostle exhorts us not to take the *world* for an example.

Secondly. I address myself to you, who sincerely desire to apply this discourse to its true design. I grant, the road opened to you is difficult. To resist the torrent, to brave the multitude, to see one's self like Elijah, *alone* on the Lord's side, and, in this general apostacy, in which a christian so often finds himself, when he desires to sacrifice all to his duty, to recollect motives of attachment to it, this is one of the noblest efforts of christian heroism.

However, after all, it would argue great puerility to magnify our ideas of the crowd, the many, the multitude; it would be childish to be too much struck with these ideas,

every body thinks, in this manner, all the world acts thus. I affirm, that truth and virtue have more partizans than error and vice, and God hath more disciples than Satan. What do you call the crowd, the many, the multitude? What do you mean by all the world? What! You and your companions, your family, your acquaintances, your fellow citizens, the inhabitants of this globe, to which the Creator hath confined you; is this what you call all the world? What littleness of ideas! Cast your eyes on that little mole hill, occupied by a few thousands of ants, lend them intelligence, propose to one of these insects other maxims than those of his fellows, exhort him to have a little more ambition than to occupy a tiny imperceptible space upon that mole hill, animate him to form projects more noble than that of collecting a few grains of corn, and then put into the mouth of this little emmet the same pretext that you make use of to us; I shall be alone, all the world conduct themselves in another manner. Would you not pity this insect? Would not he appear more contemptible to you for his mean and spiritless ideas than for the diminutiveness of his body? Would you not look with disdain on an ant, that had no other ambition than that of taking for a model other insects about him, and preferring their approbation before that of mankind, who hold a rank so high in the scale of the world? My brethren, give what colours you will to this imagination, it is however certain, that you would form unjust ideas of this insect. An emmet hath no relation to those beings, which you propose to him for models. Such ideas of happiness as you trace to him have no proportion to his faculties. Is an emmet capable of science to be allured by the company of the learned? Can an ant form plans of sieges and battles to render himself sensible of that glory, which exploits of war acquire, and for which the heroes of the world sacrifice their repose and their lives?

It is you, who have that meanness of soul, which you just now pitied in an ant. You inhabit cities and provinces, which compared with the rest of the world resemble the size of mole hills, the whole globe itself is nothing in comparison of the immense spaces, in which other works of the Creator are lodged. You creep on earth with a handful of men much less in comparison with the thousand thousands of other intelligences than an ant hill is in comparison of mankind. You have intimate relations to these intelligences; you like them are capable of great and noble functions; like them

you

you are capable of knowledge; like them you are able to know the Supreme Being; you can love like them; you can form tender and delicate connections as they can; and like them you are destined to eternal duration and felicity.

Do not say then, I shall be alone, nobody lives as you would have me live. They are the men, who surround you that are *nobody* in comparrison of the intelligences, whom I propose to you for examples. It ill suits insignificant men to consider themselves alone as in the centre of divine benevolence, and as the only subjects of a monarch, who reigneth over all existence. *He sitteth upon the circle of the earth*, whence the *inhabitants* appear to him *as grasshoppers. He bringeth princes to nothing, he considereth the judges of the earth as vanity. He shall blow upon them and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away like stubble*, Isa. xl. 22.

But ye, celestial intelligences, seraphims burning with love, angels mighty in strength, messengers of the divine will, spirits rapid as the wind, and penetrating as fire, ye *redeemed of all nations, all kindred, all people, all tongues*, Rev. v. 9. ye make the crowd, ye fill the court of the sovereign of the world; and, when we refuse to conform ourselves to this world, we imitate you; and when the slaves of the world shall he loaded with chains of darkness, we shall share with you the *river of pleasures* at the right hand of that God, whom you serve, and to whose service we like you devote ourselves. God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THE ADVANTAGES OF PIETY.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 18.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THERE never was a disposition more odious, or more unjust than that of the profane Jews, of whom Jeremiah speaks in the forty-fourth chapter of his prophecies. He had addressed to them the most pressing and pathetical exhortations to dissuade them from worshipping the goddess Isis, and to divert them from the infamous debaucheries, with which the Egyptians accompanied it. There reply was in these words, *As for the word, that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well and saw no evil: but since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine*, ver. 16—18. Nothing can equal the sacrifices, which religion requires of us; therefore nothing ought to equal the recompence, which it sets before us. Sometimes it requires us like the father of the faithful to quit our country and our relations and to go *out, not knowing whither* we go, according to the expression of St. Paul, Heb. xi. 8. Sometimes it requires us to tread in the bloody steps of those who

had

had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea of bonds and imprisonment. Some *were stoned,* others *were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented,* ver. 36, 37. Always it calls us to triumph over our passions, to renounce our own senses, to mortify the flesh with its desires, and to bring all the thoughts of our minds, and all the emotions of our hearts into obedience to Jesus Christ. To animate us to sacrifices so great, it is necessary we should find in religion a superiority of happiness and reward, and it would be to rob it of all its disciples to represent it as fatal to the interests of such as pursue it.

As this disposition is odious, so it is unjust. The miserable Jews, of whom the prophet Jeremiah speaks, did indeed consult the prophets of God, but they would not obey their voice; they would sometimes suspend their idolatrous rites, but they would never entirely renounce them; they discovered some zeal for the exterior of religion, but they paid no attention to the spirit and substance of it, and as God refused to grant to this outside of piety such advantages as he had promised to the truly godly, they complained that the true religion had been to them a source of misery.

Were they the Jews of the prophets time? Are they only Jews, who make such a criminal complaint? Are they the only persons, who, placing religion in certain exterior performances, and mutilated virtues, complain that they do not feel that peace of conscience, those ineffable transports, that anticipated heaven, which are foretastes and earnests of eternal joy? We are going to day, my brethren, to set before you the treasures, which God opens to us in communion with him: but we are going at the same time to trace out the character of those, on whom they are bestowed. This is the design of this discourse, and for this purpose we will divide it into two parts; First, We will examine what the apostle means by *godliness,* in the words of the text: And secondly, We will point out the *advantages* affixed to it. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

I. What is *godliness* or piety? It is difficult to include an adequate idea of it in the bounds of what is called a definition. Piety is a habit of knowledge in the mind--rectitude in the conscience—sacrifice in the life—and zeal in the heart. By the know-

ledge, that guides it, it is distinguished from the visions of the superstitious; by the rectitude, from whence it proceeds, it is distinguished from hypocrisy; by the sacrifice, which justifies it, it is distinguished from the unmeaning obedience of him, who goes as a happy constitution leads him; in fine, by the fervour, that animates it, it is distinguished from the languishing emotions of the lukewarm.

1. Piety supposes *knowledge* in the mind. When God reveals a doctrine of religion to us, he treats us as reasonable beings, capable of examination and reflection. He doth not require us to admit any truth without evidence. If he would have us believe the existence of a first cause, he engraves it on every particle of the universe. If he would have us believe the divinity of revelation, he makes some character of that divinity shine in every part of it. Would he have us believe the immortality of the soul, he attests it in every page of the sacred book. Accordingly, without previous knowledge, piety can neither support us under temptations, nor enable us to render to God such homage as is worthy of him.

It cannot support us in temptation. When satan endeavours to seduce us, he offers us the allurements of present and sensible good, and exposes in our sight the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. If we have nothing to oppose against him but superficial opinions of a precarious and ignorant system, we shall not find ourselves in a condition to withstand him.

Nor can piety destitute of knowledge enable us to render to God such worship as is worthy of him; for when do we render to God worship suitable to his majesty? Is it when, submitting to the church, and saying to a man, in the language of scripture, *Rabbi, Rabbi*, we place him on a sovereign throne, and make our reason fall prostrate before his intelligence? No certainly; It is when, submitting ourselves to the decisions of God, we regard him as the source of truth and knowledge, and believe on his testimony doctrines the most abtruse, and mysteries the most sublime.

True piety is wise, it rises out of those profound reflections, which the godly man makes on the excellence of religion. *Open thou mine eyes* said the prophet formerly, *that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. Thy words is a lamp unto my feet, and*

a light unto my path. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word, Psalm cxix. 18. 99. 105. 148.

This is the first character of godliness, and this character distinguisheth it from superstition. A superstitious man doth not derive his principles from the source of knowledge. A family tradition, a tale, a legend, a monkish fable, the reverie of a confessor, the decision of a council, this is his law, this is his light, this is his gospel.

2. Piety must be *sincere*, and this distinguisheth it from hypocrisy. A hypocrite puts on all the appearance of religion, and adorns himself with the most sacred part of it. Observe his deportment, it is an affected gravity, which nothing can alter. Hear his conversation, he talks with a studied industry on the most solemn subjects, he is full of sententious sayings, and pious maxims, and so severe that he is ready to take offence at the most innocent actions. Mind his dress, it is precise and singular, and a sort of sanctity is affected in all his furniture, and in all his equipage. Follow him to a place of worship, there particularly his hypocrisy erects its tribunal, and there he displays his religion in all its pomp. There he seems more assidous than the most wise and zealous christians. There he lifts up his eyes to heaven. There he sighs. There he bedews the earth with his tears. In one word, whatever seems venerable in the church he takes pains to practise, and pleasure to display.

Jesus Christ hath given us the original of this portrait in the persons of the pharisees of his time, and the only inconvenience we find in describing such characters is, that, speak where we will, it seems as if we intended to depict such individuals of the present age as seem to have taken these ancient hypocrites for their model. Never was the art of counterfeiting piety carried to such perfection by any men as by the old pharisees. They separated themselves from a commerce with mankind, whom they called in contempt *people of the world**. They made long prayers. They fasted every Monday and Friday. They lay on planks and stones. They put thorns on the bottom of their gowns to tear their flesh. They wore strait girdles about their bodies. They tithes, not only according to law, but beyond what the law required. Above all they were great makers of proselytes, and

* See Goodwin's Moses and Aaron. Book I. Chap. 10. Sect. 7.

and this was in some sort their distinguishing character, and when they had made one, they never failed to instruct him thoroughly to hate all such as were not of their opinion on particular questions. All this was shew, all this proceeded from a deep hypocrisy; by all this they had no other design than to acquire reputation for holiness, and to make themselves masters of the people, who are more easily taken with exterior appearances than with solid virtue.

Such is the character of hypocrisy, a character that God detests. How often does Jesus Christ denounce anathemas against people of this character? How often does he cry concerning them, *woe, woe?* Sincerity is one character of true piety, *O Lord, thou hast proved my heart, thou hast visited me in the night, thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* Psal. xvii. 3. John xxi. 17. This character makes our love to God resemble his to us. When God gives himself to us in religion, it is not in mere appearances and protestations: but it is with real sentiments, emanations of heart.

3. Piety supposes *sacrifice*, and by this we distinguish it from a devotion of humour and constitution, with which it hath been too often confounded. There is a devotee of temper and habit, who, really, hath a happy disposition, but which may be attended with dangerous consequences. Such a man consults less the law of God to regulate his conduct than his own inclinations, and the nature of his constitution. As, by a singular favour of heaven, he hath not received one of those irregular constitutions, which most men have, but a happy natural disposition, improved too by a good education, he finds in himself but little indisposition to the general maxims of christianity. Being naturally melancholy, he doth not break out into unbridled mirth, and excessive pleasures. As he is naturally collected in himself, and not communicative, he doth not follow the crowd through the turbulence and tumult of the world. As he is naturally inactive, and soon disgusted with labour and pains taking, we never see him animated with the madness of gadding about every where, weighing himself down with a multitude of business, nor permitting any thing to happen in society without being himself the first mover, and putting to it the last hand. These are all happy incidents; not to run into excessive pleasure, not to follow the crowd in the noise

and tumult of the world, not to run mad with hurry and weary himself with an infinity of business, to give up the mind to recollection, all this is worthy of praise: but what is a devotion of this kind, that owes its birth only to incidents of this sort? I compare it to the faith of the man, who believes the truths of the gospel only through a headstrong prejudice, only because, by a lucky chance, he had a father or a tutor, who believed them. As such a man cannot have a faith acceptable to God, so neither can he, who, obeys the laws of God, because, by a sort of chance of this kind, they are conformable to his natural temper, offer to him the sacrifice of true obedience. Had you been naturally inclined to dissipation, you would have been excessively dissipated, for the very same reason that you are now excessively fond of retirement. Had you been naturally industrious, you would have exceeded in labouring, on the very principle, which now inclines you to be too fond of ease and stillness. Had you been naturally inclined to mirth, you would have shewn excessive levity, on the very principle, that now turns your gravity into gloom and melancholy. Would you know yourselves? See, examine yourselves. You say, your piety inclines you to surmount all temptations to dissipation: but does it enable you to resist those to retirement: It makes you firm against temptations to pleasure, but does it free you from sullenness? It enables you to surmount temptations to violent exertions, but does it raise you above littleness? The same may be said of the rest. Happy he, who arranges his actions with a special regard to his own heart, inquiring what he can find there opposite to the law of God, attacking the strong holds of Satan within himself, and directing all his fire and force to that point. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire, mine ears hast thou opened. Lo, I come. I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart,* Gal. v. 24 Rom. xii. 1. Psal. xl. 7, &c.

4. *Zeal* and fervour are the last characters of piety. By this we know the godly man from such luke-warm christians as practise the duties of religion in substance, but do so with a coldness, that sinks the value of the service. They can hear the afflictions of the church narrated without emotions,

tions, and see a confused heap of stones, sad remains of houses consecrated to our God, without *favouring the dust thereof*, according to the expression of the scripture. They can see the dimensions of the *love* of God measured, the *breadth*, and *length*, and *depth*, and *heighth*, without feeling the least warmth from the ardour and flame of so vehement a love. They can be present at the offering of one of those lively, tender, fervent prayers, which God Almighty himself condescends to hear and answer, and for the sake of which he forgives crimes and averts judgment, without entering at all into the spirit of these subjects. Such men as these require persuasion, compulsion and power to force them.

A man, who truly loves God, hath sentiments of zeal and fervour Observe David, see his joy before the ark: neither the royal grandeur, nor the prophetical gravity, nor the gazing of the populace, nor the reproaches of an interested wife, could cool his zeal. Observe Elijah, *I have been, said he, very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away.* 1 Kings xix. 10. Behold good Eli, the frost of fourscore could not chill the ardour that inflamed him. *What is there done, my son?* said he to the unwelcome messenger, who came to inform him of the defeat of his army, the messenger replied, *Israel is fled before the philistines, and there hath also been a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons of Hophni and Phinehas are dead:* Thus far he supported himself: but when the man went on to say, *the ark of God is taken*, instantly, on hearing that the ark was gone, *he fell backward*, he could not survive the loss of that august symbol of the divine presence, but died with grief. Observe Nehemiah, to whom his royal master put the question, *Why is thy countenance sad?* said he, *Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?* chap. ii. 2, &c. Consider St. Paul, *We glory in tribulations, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy Ghost which is given unto us*, Rom. v. 3. 5.

Do you imagine you truly love God, while you have only languid emotions toward him, and while you reserve all your

your activity and fire for the world. There is between God and a believer a tender and affectionate intercourse. Godliness hath its festivals and exuberances. *Flesh and blood!* Ye, that *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. xv. 50. ye impure ideas of concupiscence, depart, be gone far away from our imaginations! There is a time, in which the mystical spouse faints, and utters such exclamations as these, *I sleep, but my heart waketh. Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it*, Cant. v. 2.

These are some characters of piety. Let us go on to examine the advantages of it.

II. Our apostle says *godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* There is an enormous difference between these two sorts of blessings. The blessings of the life to come are so far superior to the blessing of the present life, that when we can assure ourselves of the first, we ought to give ourselves very little concern about the last. To add one little drop of water to the boundless ocean, and to add a temporal blessing to the immense felicities, which happy spirits enjoy in the other life, is almost the same thing. St. Paul tells us, that the idea of the life to come so absorbs the idea of the present life, that to consider these two objects in this point of view, his eyes could hardly get sight of the one, it was so very diminutive, and his mind reckoned the whole as nothing: *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

Few imitate this apostle. The present, because it is present, and in spite of its rapidity, fixes our eyes, becomes a wall between us and eternity, and prevents our perceiving it. We should make many more converts to virtue, could we prove that it would render mankind happy here below, but we cannot change the order of things. Jesus Christ and his apostles have told us, that *in the world we shall have tribulation*, and that *all, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall*

shall suffer persecution, John xvi. 33. 2 Tim. iii. 12. However it is true, that even here piety procures pleasures, which usually surpass all those of worldly people: at least, which are sufficient to support us in a road leading to eternal happiness.

I. Consider first how piety influences our *health*. Our bodies decay, I allow, by numberless means. Death enters them by the air we breathe, and by the elements that support them, and whatever contributes to make them live contributes at the same time to make them die. Let us allow, my brethren, that most maladies take their rise in such excesses as the law of God condemns. How can a man devoured with ambition, avarice and vengeance, a man whose passions keep him in perpetual agitations, depriving him of peace, and robbing him of sleep: how can he, who passes whole nights and days in gaming, animated with the desire of gaining the money of his neighbour, tortured by turns with the hope of a fortune, and the fear of a bankruptcy: how can he, who drowns himself in wine, or overcharges himself with gluttony: how can he, who abandons himself without a curb to excessive lewdness, and who makes every thing serve his voluptuousness: how is it possible for people of these kinds to expect a firm and lasting health. Godliness is a bar to all these disorders, *the fear of the Lord prolongeth days: it is a fountain of life to guard us from the snares of death*, Prov. x. 27. and xii. 27. If then it be true that health is an invaluable treasure, if it be that, which ought to hold the first rank among the blessings of life, if without it all others are of no value, it is as certain that without love to the law of God we cannot enjoy much pleasure in life.

The force of this reflection is certainly very little felt in the days of youth and vigour, for then we usually consider these as eternal advantages, which nothing can alter: but when old age comes, when by continual languors, and by exquisite pains, men expiate the disorders of an irregular life, then that fear of God is respected, which teaches us to prevent them. Ye martyrs of concupiscence, ye victims of voluptuousness, you, who formerly tasted the pleasures of sin, and are now thoroughly feeling the horrors of it, and who in consequence of your excesses are already given up to an anticipated hell, do you serve us for demonstration, and example. You are become knowing by experience, now teach

teach our youth how beneficial it is to lead a regular life in their first years, and as your intemperance has offended the church, let the pains you endure serve to restrain such as are weak enough to imitate your bad examples. Those trembling hands, that shaking head, those disjointed knees, that extinguished resolution, that feeble memory, that worn out brain, that body all infection and putrifaction, these are the dreadful rewards, which the devil bestows on those, on whom he is preparing himself shortly to exercise all his fury and rage. On this article then, instead of saying with the profane, *what profit is it to keep the ordinances of God, and to walk mournfully before the Lord of hosts?* Mal. ii. 14. We ought to say with St. Paul, *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death,* Rom. vi. 21.

2. Consider next how piety influences our *reputation.* I am aware, that worldly men by decrying piety endeavour to avenge themselves for the want of courage to practise it. I am aware, too, that practise wickedness as much, as often, and as far as ever we can, we shall always find ourselves in a circle of companions like ourselves. But after all, it is however indisputable, that good people usually acquire the respect of such as have not the laudable ambition of imitating them. I appeal only to your own conscience. Is it not true, that, even while you are gratifying your own passions, you cannot help admiring such as subdue theirs? Is it not true, that, except on some occasions, in which you want, and therefore seek accomplices in sin, you would rather choose to form connections, to make bargains, and to deal with such as obey the laws of God, than with those who violate them? And amidst all the hatred and envy, which your irregularities excite against good people, is it not true, that your heart feels more veneration for wise, upright, and pious people than for others, who have opposite qualities? As these are your dispositions toward others, know of a truth, they are also dispositions of others toward you. Here it is, that most men are objects of great pity. The irregularities, which seem to conduct us to the end we propose, are often the very causes of our disappointment. May I not address one of you thus? You trample upon all laws human and divine; you build up a fortunate house with the substance of widows, and orphans, and oppressed people, and you cement it with their blood; you sell your votes; you defraud the state; you deceive your friends; you betray your correspondents, and after

you

you have enriched yourself by such ways you set forth in a most pompous manner your riches, your elegant furniture, your magnificent palaces, your superb equipages, and you think the public take you for a person of great consideration, and that every one is erecting in his heart an altar to your fortune. No such thing. You deceive yourself. Every one says in private, and some blunt people say to your face, you are a knave, you are a public blood sucker, and all your magnificence displays nothing but your crimes. May I not say to another, You affect to mount above your station by arrogant language, and mighty assumptions. You deck yourself with titles, and adorn yourself with names unknown to your ancestors. You put on a supercilious deportment, that ill assorts with the dust which covered you the other day, and you think by these means to efface the remembrance of your origin. No such thing. You deceive yourself. Every one takes pleasure in shewing you some of your former rags to mortify your pride, and they say to one another, he is a mean genius, he is a fool, he resembles distracted men, who having persuaded themselves that they are princes, kings, emperors, call their cottage a palace, their stick a sceptre, and their domestics courtiers. May I not speak thus to a third, You are intoxicated with your own splendor, and fascinated with your own charms, you aspire at nothing less than to make all mankind your worshippers, offering incense to the idol you yourself adore, with this view you break through the bounds of law, and the decency of your sex; your dress is vain and immodest, your conversation is loose, your deportment is indecent, and you think the world take you for a sort of goddess. No such thing. You deceive yourself. People say you have put off christian modesty, and laid aside even worldly decency, and as they judge of your private life by your public deportment, how can they think otherwise? fathers forbid their sons to keep your company, and mothers exhort their daughters to avoid your bad example.

3. Observe how godliness influences our *fortune*, by procuring us the confidence of other men, and above all by acquiring the blessing of God on our designs and undertakings. You are sometimes astonished at the alarming changes that happen in society, you are surprized to see some families decay, and others fall into absolute ruin. You cannot comprehend why some people, who held the other day the highest places in society, are now falling from that pinacle of gran-

deur, and involved in the deepest distress. Why this astonishment? There is a providence, and though God often hides himself, though the ways of his providence are usually impenetrable, though it would be an unjust way of reasoning to say such a person is wealthy therefore he is holy, such a one is indigent therefore he is wicked, yet the Lord sometimes comes out of that darkness, in which he usually conceals himself, and raises a saint out of obscurity into a state of wealth and honour.

4. Consider what an influence godliness hath in our *happiness* by calming our passions, and by setting bounds to our desires. Our faculties are finite: but our desires are boundless. From this disproportion between our desires and our faculties a thousand conflicts arise, which distress and destroy the soul. Observe the labour of an ambitious man, he is obliged to sacrifice to his prince his ease, his liberty and his life; he must appear to applaud what he inwardly condemns; and he must adjust all his opinions and sentiments by the ideas of his master. See what toils worldly honour imposes on its votaries, a worldling must revenge an affront after he hath pardoned it, and to that he must expose his establishment and his fortune, he must run the risk of being obliged either to quit his country, or to suffer such punishment as the law inflicts on those, who take that sword into their own hands, which God hath put into the hand of the magistrate, he must stab the person he loves, the person who loves him, and who offended him more through inadvertence and animosity: he must stifle all the suggestions, which conscience urges against a man, who ventures his salvation on the precarious success of a duel, and who by so doing braves all the horrors of hell. Above all, what is the condition of a heart, with what cruel alternatives is it racked and torn, when it is occupied by two passions, which oppose and counteract each other. Take ambition and avarice for an example; for, my brethren, the heart of man is sometimes the seat of two opposite tyrants, each of whom hath views and interests different from the other. Avarice says keep, ambition says give, avarice says hold fast, ambition says give up. Avarice says retire, ambition says go abroad. Ambition combats avarice, avarice combats ambition, each by turns distresses the heart, and if it groans under tyranny, whether avarice or ambition be the tyrant is indifferent. The pleasure of seeing one passion reign is always poisoned by the pain of seeing the other subdued. They resemble that woman, whose twin *children*

children struggled together within her, and who *said* during the painful sensations, *if it must be so, why* was *I* a mother?

Piety prevents these fatal effects, it maketh us content with the condition, in which providence hath placed us: it doth more, it teacheth us to be happy in any condition, how mean soever it may be. *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*, Phil. iv. 11, 12.

5. Consider the *peace*, which piety diffuseth in the conscience. The prosperity of those, who desire to free themselves from conscience, is such as to make them miserable in the midst of their greatest success. What pleasure can a man enjoy, who cannot bear to be one moment alone; a man, who needs perpetual dissipation to hide from himself his real condition; a man, who cannot reflect upon the past without remorse, think of the present without confusion, or the future without despair; a man, who carries within himself that obstinate reprover, on whom he cannot impose silence; a man, who already feels the *worm that dieth not* gnawing him; a man, who sees in the midst of his most jovial festivals the writing *of a man's hand*, which he cannot read, but which his conscience most faithfully and terribly interprets; I ask what pleasure can such a man enjoy?

Godliness not only frees us from these torments, but it communicates joy into every part of the pious man's life. If the believer be in prosperity, he considers it as an effect of the goodness of God, the governor of this universe, and as a pledge of blessings reserved for him in another world. If he be in adversity, indeed he considers it as a chastisement coming from the hand of a wise and tender parent: and the same may be said of every other condition.

6. In fine consider how piety influences the happiness of life, by the assurance it gives us of a safe, if not a comfortable *death*. There is not a single moment in life, in which it is not possible we should die, consequently there is not one instant, that may not be unhappy, if we be not in a condition to die well. While we are destitute of this assurance, we live in perpetual trouble and agitation, we see the sick, we meet funeral processions, we attend the dying, and all these different objects become motives of horror and pain. It is only when we are prepared to die well, that we bid defiance

to winds and waves, fires and shipwrecks, and that, by opposing to all these perilous casualties the hope of a happy death, we every where experience the joy, with which it inspires such as wait for it.

Collect all these articles, and unite all these advantages in one. I ask now, is it an improbable proposition, that virtue hath a reward in itself, sufficient to indemnify us for all we suffer on account of it, so that though there were nothing to expect after this life, yet it would be a problem, whether it would not be better all things considered, to practise godliness than to live in sin.

But this is not the consequence we mean to draw from our principles. We do not intend to make this use of our observations. We will not dispute with the sinner whether he finds pleasure in the practice of sin, but as he assures us, that it gives him more pleasure to gratify his passions than to subdue them, we will neither deny the fact, nor find fault with his taste, but allow that he must know better than any body what gives himself most pleasure. We only derive this consequence from all we have been hearing, that the advantages, which accompany godliness, are sufficient to support us in a course of action, that leads to eternal felicity.

This eternal felicity the apostle had chiefly in view, and on this we would fix your attention in the close of this discourse. *Godliness hath promise of the life that now is*, is a proposition, we think, plain and clear: but however it is disputable, you say, subject to many exceptions, and liable to a great number of difficulties: but *godliness hath promise of the life that is to come*, is a proposition which cannot be disputed, it is free from all difficulty, and can admit of no exception.

Having taken up nearly all the time allotted to this exercise, I will finish with one reflection. *Promise of the life to come*, annexed to godliness, is not a mere promise, it puts even in this life the pious man in possession of one part of the benefits, the perfect possession of which he lives in hope of enjoying. Follow him in four periods—First in society—Next in the closet—Then in a participation of holy ordinances—And lastly, at the approach of death: you will find him participating the eternal felicity, which is the object of his hope.

In *society*. What is the life of a man, who never goes into the company of his fellow creatures without doing them good: of a man who after the example of Jesus Christ *goes about*

about doing good: a man, who every where shews the light of a good example, who endeavours to win all hearts to God, who never ceases to publish his perfections, and to celebrate his praise, what, I ask, is the life of such a man? It is an angelical life, it is a heavenly life, it is an anticipation of that life, which happy spirits live in heaven, it is a foretaste, and prelibation of those pleasures, which are at the *right hand of God*, and of that *fulness of joy*, which is found in contemplating his majesty.

Follow the pious man into the silent *closet*. There he recollects, concenters himself, and loses himself in God. There, in the rich source of religion, he quenches the thirst of knowing, elevating, perpetuating, and extending himself, which burns within him, and there he feels how God, the author of his nature, proportions himself to the boundless capacity of the human heart. There, ye earthly thoughts, ye worldly cares, ye troublesome *birds of prey*, that so often perplex us in life, there you have no access! There revolving in his mind the divers objects presented to him in religion, he feels the various emotions that are proper to each. Sometimes the rich gifts of God in nature, and the insignificance of man the receiver are objects of his contemplation, and then he exclaims, *O Lord, my Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained*, Psal. viii. 1. 3. I cannot help crying, *What is man that thou art mindful of him! And the Son of man that thou visitest him!* ver. 4. Sometimes the brightness of the divine perfections shining in Jesus Christ fixes his attention, and then he exclaims, *Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever!* Psal. xlv. 2. Sometimes his mind contemplates that train of favours, with which God hath enriched every believer in his church, and then he cries, *Many, O Lord my God are thy wonderfuls works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us ward! they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee! Would I declare and speak of them? They are more than can be numbered!* Psal. xl. 5. Sometimes it is the sacrifice of the cross, and then he saith, *Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh!* 1 Tim. iii. 16. Sometimes it is the joy of possessing God, and then his language is, *My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness!* Psal. lxiii. 5.

Sometimes

Sometimes it is the desire of enjoying God in a greater measure, and in a richer abundance, and then he says with Asaph, my supreme *good* is *to draw near to God! When shall I come? O when shall I come and appear before God!* Psalm. lxxiii. 28. and xlii. 2.

Follow this man in the participation of holy *ordinances.* Represent to yourselves a man, who after preparing himself some days, or some weeks for the holy communion, bringing thither a heart proportioned to the labour, which he hath taken to dispose it properly; imagine such a man sitting at this table along with the ambitious, the impure, the revengeful, the vain, all the members of this community, suppose this man saying to himself, they are not only men who see and consider me, they are angels, who encamp around such as love God; it is Jesus Christ, who sits amidst his disciples assembled in his name; it is God himself, who sees all, and examines all the dispositions I bring to his table. It is not only an invitation to this table given me by ministers, it is *wisdom, who hath furnished her table, mingled her wine,* Prov. ix. 1, 2. and who crieth, *Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters,* Isaiah lv. It is my Saviour, who saith to me, *With desire, I have desired to eat with you,* Luke xxii. 15. It is not only material bread, that I am receiving, it is a symbol of the body and blood of Christ, it is his flesh and blood under the elements of bread and wine. It will be not only a little tranquillity of conscience, which I shall receive at this table, if I enter into the spirit of the mystery set before me: but I shall have consolations on my death bed, triumphs after death, and oceans of felicity and glory for ever. God hath not preserved me till now merely to give me an opportunity of sitting here: but to open to me the treasures of his patience and long suffering: to enable me to repent of my former negligence, of breaking the sabbath, profaning the communion, committing iniquity, forgetting my promises, and offending my creator.

I ask, my brethren, what is the man, who approaches the Lord's table with such dispositions! Is he a common man? Verily with eyes of flesh, I see nothing to distinguish him from the crowd. I see this man confounded with all others, whom a lax disciple suffers to partake of this ordinance, and to receive with unclean hands and a profane mouth the most holy symbols of our religion; at most I see only an agitation of his senses, a spark shining in his eye, a look cast towards heaven, emotions, which the veil of humility that covers

covers him cannot entirely conceal: but with the eyes of my mind I behold a man of a superior order, a man in paradise, a man nourished with pleasure at the right hand of God, a man at whose conversion the angels of God rejoice, a man fastened to the triumphal car of Jesus Christ, and who makes the glory of the triumph, a man who hath the happy art of making heaven descend into his soul; I behold, amidst the miseries and vanities of the world, a man already *justified, already raised,* already *glorified, already sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus,* Rom. viii. 30. Eph. ii. 6. I see a man ascending to heaven along with Jesus Christ, amidst the shouting of the heavenly choir, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and let the King of glory in,* Psalm. xxiv. 7. I see a man *with uncovered face beholding the glory of the Lord,* and changing *from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord,* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

But it is particularly in a *dying bed* that the pious man enjoys foretastes of the life to come. A worldling is confounded at the approach of that dismal night, which hides futurity from him, or rather despair siezes his soul at the rising of that dreadful light, which discovers to him a dispensation of punishment, in spite of his obstinate denial of it. Then he sees fire, flames, devils, *a lake of fire, the smoke* of which *ascendeth up for ever and ever.* Then he shrinks back from the bitter cup, the *dregs* of which he must drink; he tries though in vain to put off the end by his too late prayer, and he cries at its approach, *Mountains fall on me, hills cover me!* As for the believer, he sees and desires nothing but that dispensation of happiness, which he hath already embraced by faith, possessed by hope, and tasted by the comforts of the holy Spirit in his soul; and hence comes that active fervour, which makes his countenance luminous like that of departing Stephen. I cannot better express such sentiments than in the words of the primitive saints, who so happily experienced them.

I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord! I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall see for myself, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another. Though thou slayest me, yet will I trust in thee, O God! Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. I know whom I have believed

believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day Neither count I my life dear so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Lord Jesus receive my spirit. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? In these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God! When shall I come and appear before God? How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee! Thine altars, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my king and my God!

May you all, my brethren, may every one of you know these truths by experience. God grant you the grace. To him be honour and glory for ever.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

THE REPENTANCE OF THE UNCHASTE WOMAN.

LUKE vii. 36.---50.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them *with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, this man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman* this is *that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped* them *with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with*

ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

LET me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great: but let me not fall into the hand of man, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. This was the request, that David made, in the most unhappy moment of his life. A prophet sent by an avenging God came to bring him a choice of afflictions, *I offer thee three things, choose one of them, that I may do it unto thee. Shall three years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me,* ver. 12, &c.

What a proposal was this to a man accustomed to consider heaven as a source of benedictions and favours! Henceforth he was to consider it only as a cavern of thunder and lightning, flashing and rolling and ready to strike him dead! which of these punishments will he choose? Which of them could he choose without reproaching himself in future that he had chosen the worst? Which would you have chosen had you been in his place, my brethren? Would you have determined for war? Could you have borne the bare idea of it? Could you have indured to see the once victorious armies of Israel led in triumph by an enemy, the ark of the Lord a captive, a cruel and barbarous soldiery reducing a kingdom to ashes, razing fortresses, ravaging a harvest, and destroying in a moment the hope of a whole year? Would you have determined for famine? Would you have chosen to have *the heaven* become as *iron, and the earth brass,* the seed dying in the earth, or the corn burning before it was ripe, *The locusts eating what the palmer worm hath left, and the canker worm eating what the locust hath left,* Joel i. 4. men snatching bread from one another's hands, struggling between life and death, and starving till food would afford no nourishment? Would you have chosen mortality? Could you have reconciled yourselves to the terrible times in

in which contagion on the wings of the wind carries its deadly poison with the rapidity of lightning from city to city, from house to house; a time in which social living is at an end, when each is wholly employed in guarding himself from danger, and hath no opportunity to take care of others; when the father flees from the sight of the son, the son from that of the father, the wife avoids the husband, the husband the wife; when each dreads the sight of the person he most esteems, and receives, and communicates poisonous and deadly infection? These are the dreadful punishments out of which God required guilty David to choose one. These he was to weigh in a balance, while he agitated the mournful question, which of the three shall I choose for my lot? However, he determines, *Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great; but let me not fall into the hand of man.* He thought, that immediate strokes from the hand of a God, merciful though displeased, would be most tolerable. He could conceive nothing more terrible than to see between God and himself men, who would intercept his looks, and who would prevent his access to the throne of grace.

My brethren, the wish of David under his consternation may direct ours in regard to all the spots, that have defiled our lives. True, the eyes of God are infinitely more pure than those of men. He, indeed discovers frailties in our lives, which have escaped our notice, and *if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart.* It is true, he hath punishments to inflict on us infinitely more dreadful than any mankind can invent, and if men can *kill the body, God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* However, this Almighty God, this terrible, this avenging God is a merciful God, *great are his tender mercies:* but men, men are cruel, yea, the very men, who allow themselves to live in the most shameful licentiousness, men who have the most need of the patience of others, men who themselves deserve the most rigorous punishments, these very men are usually void of all pity for their fellows. Behold a famous example. The unchaste woman in the text experienced both, and by turns made trial of the judgment of God, and the judgment of men. But she met with a very different treatment. In Jesus Christ she found a very severe legislator, who left her awhile to shed tears, and very bitter tears; a legislator, who left her awhile to her own grief, and sat and saw her hair dishevelled, and her features distorted; but who soon

took care to dry up her tears, and to address this comfortable language to her, *Go in peace.* On the contrary, in the hands of men she found nothing but barbarity and cruelty. She heard a supercilious pharisee endeavour to arm against her the Redeemer of mankind, try to persuade him to denounce her sentence of death, even while she was repenting of her sin, and do his utmost to cause condemnation to flow from the very fountain of grace and mercy.

It is this instructive, this comfortable history, that we set before you to day, and which presents *three* very different objects to our meditation, the conduct of the incontinent woman, that of the pharisee, and that of Jesus Christ. In the conduct of the woman, prostrate at the feet of our Saviour, you see the principal characters of repentance. In that of the pharisee you may observe the venom, that not unfrequently infects the judgments, which mankind make of one another. And in that of Jesus Christ you may behold free and generous emotions of pity, mercy and compassion. Let us enter into the matter.

I. Let us first observe the *incontinent woman*, now become a penitent. The question most controverted by interpreters, and very differently answered by them, is that, which in our opinion is the least important, that is, who was this woman? Not that a perfect knowledge of her person, and of the history of her life, would not be very proper, by explaining the nature of her sins, to give us a just idea of her repentance, and so contribute to elucidate the text: but because, though we have taken a great deal of pains, we have found nothing on this article worthy to be proposed to critical hearers, who insist upon being treated as rational men, and who refuse to determine a point without evidence.

I know, some expositors, misled by a resemblance between this anointing of Jesus Christ, and that mentioned in the eleventh chapter of St. John, when our Saviour supped with Lazarus, have supposed that the woman here spoken of was the same Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who paid such a profound attention to the discourse of Jesus Christ, and who, according to the evangelist, *anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair.* And as other parts of the gospel speak of another *Mary called Magdalen*, some have thought that Mary the sister of Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, *out of whom* it is said, Jesus Christ had *cast seven*

seven devils, and the woman of our text, were one and the same person.

We do not intend to enter on these discussions. It is sufficient to know, first, that the woman here in question lived in the city of Nain, which sufficiently distinguishes her from Mary the sister of Lazarus, who was of Bethany, and from Mary Magdalen, who probably was so called, because she was born at *Magdala*, a little town in the tribe of Manasseh. Secondly, the woman of our text was one of a bad life, that is to say, guilty of impurity. The original word signifies a *sinner*. This term sometimes signifies in scripture the condition of such as lived out of the covenant, and in this sense it is used in the epistle to the Galatians, where St. Paul calls pagans *sinners*: but the word is applied in Greek authors to those women, who were such as all the circumstances of our history engage us to consider this woman. Though it is easy to determine the sin of this woman in general, yet it is not so easy to determine the particular kind, whether it had been adultery, or prostitution, or only some one criminal intrigue. Our reflections will by turns regard each of these conditions. In fine, It is highly probable, both by the discourse of the pharisee, and by the ointment, with which this woman anointed the feet of Jesus Christ, that she was a person of some fortune. This is all I know on this sort of questions. Should any one require more, I should not blush to avow my ignorance, and to recommend him to guides wiser than any I have the honour of being acquainted with, or to such as possess that, which in my opinion, of all the talents of learned men, seems to me least to be envied, I mean that of having fixed opinions on doubtful subjects unsupported by any solid arguments.

We will confine ourselves to the principal circumstances of the life of this *sinner;* and to put our observations into a kind of order we will examine first, her grief—next, the Saviour to whom she applied—then, the love that inflamed her—and lastly, the courage, with which she was animated. In these four circumstances we observe four chief characters of repentance. First, Repentance must be lively, and accompanied with keen remorse. Our sinner weeps, and her tears speak the language of her heart. Secondly, Repentance must be wise in its application. Our sinner humbles herself at the feet of him, *who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. Thirdly, Repentance must be tender

tender in its exercise, and acts of divine love must take place of the love of sin. Fourthly, Repentance must be bold. Our sinner surmounts all the scruples dictated by false honour, she goes into the house of the pharisee, and acknowledges her misconduct in the presence of all the guests, and was no more ashamed to disavow her former crimes than she had been to commit them.

We consider, in the repentance of this woman the *grief* with which she was penetrated. Repentance must be accompanied with keen remorse. It is the chief character of it. In whatever class of unchaste people this woman ought to be placed, whether she had been a common prostitute, or an adulteress, or whether being unmarried she had abandoned herself for once to criminal voluptuousness, she had too much reason to weep and lament. If she had been guilty of *prostitution*, she could not shed tears too bitter. Can any colours sufficiently describe a woman, who is arrived at such a pitch of impurity as to eradicate every degree of modesty; a woman letting herself out to infamy, and giving herself up to the highest bidder; one who publicly devotes herself to the greatest excesses, whose house is a school of abomination, whence proceed those detestable maxims, which poison the minds of men, and those infamous debaucheries, which infect the body, and throw whole families into a state of putrefaction? It is saying too little to affirm, that this woman ought to shed bitter tears at the recollection of her scandalous and dissolute life. The priests and magistrates, and people of Nain ought to have covered themselves in sack cloth and ashes for having tolerated such a house, for not having one spark of the zeal of *Phinehas the son of Eleazar*, Num. xxv. 11. For having left one stone upon another as a monument of the profligacy of the city, and for not having erased the very foundations of such a house though they, who were employed in the business, had been buried in the ruins. One such house suffered in a city is enough to draw down the curse of heaven on a whole province, a whole kingdom.

Rome, what a fair opportunity have I now to confound thee! Am I not able to produce in the sight of the whole world full proof of thy shame and infamy? Do not a part of thy revenues proceed from a tax on prostitution*? Are not prostitutes of both sexes thy *nursing fathers, and nursing mothers;* is not the holy see in part supported, to use the language

* See the second volume of these sermons, serm. X. p. 270, in the note.

language of scripture, by *the hire of a whore, and the price of dog?* Deut. xxiii. 18. But alas! I should leave thee too much reason to retort. I should fear, you would oppose our excesses against your excesses. I should have too much reason to fear a wound by the dart shot at thee. I should tremble lest thou shouldest draw it smoking from thine own unclean heart, and lodge it in ours. O God! *teach my hands to day to war, and my fingers to fight.* My brethren, should access to this pulpit be for ever forbidden to us in future; though I were sure this discourse would be considered as a torch of sedition intended to set all these provinces in a flame; and should a part of the punishment due to the fomentors of the crime fall upon the head of him who hath the courage to reprove it, I do, and I will declare, that the prosperity of these provinces can never, no never be well established, while such affronts are publicly offered to the majesty of that God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil,* Hab. i. 13. Ah! Proclaim no more fasts, convoke no more solemn assemblies, appoint no more public prayers to avert the anger of heaven. *Let not the priests, the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, let them not say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach,* Joel ii. 17. All this exterior of devotion will be useless, while there are amongst us places publicly set apart for impurity. The filthy vapour, that proceeds from them, will ascend, and form a thick cloud between us and the throne of grace, a cloud, which the most ardent prayers cannot pierce through.

Perhaps our penitent had been guilty of *adultery.* What idea must a woman form of herself, if she have committed this crime, and considers it in its true point of light? Let her attentively observe the dangerous condition, into which she hath plunged herself, and that to which she is yet exposed. She hath taken for her model the woman described by Solomon, and who hath had too many copies in latter ages, that *strange woman in the attire of an harlot,* who *is subtle of heart, loud and stubborn, her feet abiding not in her house, now without, now in the streets, lying in wait at every corner,* and saying to such *among the youth* as are *void of understanding, I have peace offerings with me, this day have I paid my vows. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love, for the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey, and will not come*

come home till the day appointed, Prov. vii. 5, &c. Is it necessary, think you, my brethren, to alter many of these descriptive expressions to give a likeness of the manners of our times?

Are not modern dissipations described in the perpetual motion of this *strange woman*, whose *feet abide not in her house*, who is *now without* in the country, then *in the streets, and at every corner*? What are some curious, elegant and fashionable dresses, but *the attire of a harlot*? Are not the continual artifices, and accumulated dissimulations, which some people use to conceal future designs, or to cover past crimes, are not these features of this *subtle woman*? What are those pains taken to form certain parties of pleasure but features of this woman, who saith, *I have peace offerings with me, I have this day paid my vows, come, let us solace ourselves with loves*? What are certain moments expected with impatience, managed with industry and employed with avidity, but features of this woman, who saith *to fools among the youths, the good man is not at home, nor will he come home till the day appointed*?—I stop.—If the unchaste woman in the text, had been guilty of adultery, she had defiled the most sacred and inviolable of all connections. She had kindled discord in the family of him, who was the object of her criminal regard. She had given an example of impurity and perfidy to her children and her domestics, to the world and to the church. She had affronted in the most cruel and fatal manner the man, to whom she owed the tenderest attachment, and the most profound respect. She had covered her parents with disgrace, and provoked such as knew her debauchery to inquire from which of her ancestors she had received such impure and tainted blood. She had divided her heart and her bed with the most implacable enemy of her family. She had hazarded the legitimacy of her children, and confounded the lawful heir with a spurious offspring. Are any tears too bitter to expiate such an odious complication of crimes? Is any quantity too great to shed to wash away such guilt as this?

But we will not take pains to blacken the reputation of this penitent: we may suppose her unchaste, as the evangelist leads us to do, without supposing her an adulteress or a prostitute. She might have fallen *once*, and only once. Her sin, however, even in this case must have become a perpetual source of sorrow, thousands and thousands of sad reflections

reflections must have pierced her heart. Was this the only fruit of my education? Is this all I have learned from the many lessons, that have been given me from my cradle, and which seem so proper to guard me for ever against the rocks where my feeble virtue has been shipwrecked? I have renounced the decency of my sex, the appurtenances of which always have been timidity, scrupulosity, delicacy and modesty. I have committed one of those crimes, which, whether it be justice or cruelty, mankind never forgive. I have given myself up to the unkindness and contempt of him, to whom I have shamefully sacrificed my honour. I have fixed daggers in the hearts of my parents, I have caused that to be attributed to their negligence, which was occasioned only by my own depravity and folly. I have banished myself for ever from the company of prudent persons. How can I bear their looks? Where can I find a night dark enough to conceal me from their sight?

Thus might our mourner think; but to refer all her grief to motives of this kind would be to insult her repentance. She hath other motives more worthy of a penitent. This heart, the heart that my God demanded with so much condescension and love, I have denied him, and given up to voluptuousness. This body, which should have been a *temple of the holy Ghost*, is become the den of an impure passion. The time and pains I should have employed in the work of my salvation, I have spent in robbing Jesus Christ of his conquests. I have disputed with my Saviour the souls he redeemed with his blood, and what he came to save. I have endeavoured to sink in perdition. I am become the cause of the remorse of my accomplice in sin, he considers me with horror, he reproaches me with the very temptations, to which he exposed me, and when our eyes meet in a religious assembly, or in the performance of a ceremony of devotion, he tacitly tells me, that I made him unworthy to be there. I shall be his executioner on his death bed, perhaps I shall be so through all eternity. I have exposed myself to a thousand dangers, from which nothing but the grace of God hath protected me, to a thousand perils and dreadful consequences, the sad and horrible examples of which stain all history. Such are the causes of the tears of this penitent. *She stood at the feet* of Jesus Christ *weeping, and washed his feet with tears.* This is the first character of true repentence, it consists in part in keen remorse.

Repentance must be *wise* in its application. Our sinner did not go to the foot of mount Sinai to seek for absolution under pretence of her own righteousness, and to demand justification as a reward due to her works. She was afraid, as she had reason to be, that the language of that dreadful mountain proceeding from the mouth of divine justice would pierce her through. Nor did she endeavour to ward off the blows of justice by covering herself with superstitious practices. She did not say *wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Micah vi. 7. She did not even require priests and Levites to offer propitiatory sacrifices for her. She discerned the sophisms of error, and acknowledged the Redeemer of mankind under the veils of infirmity and poverty, that covered him. She knew, that *the blood of bulls and of goats* could not purify the conscience. She knew that Jesus sitting at table with the pharisee was the only offering, the only victim of worth sufficient to satisfy the justice of an offended God. She knew that he was *made unto* sinners *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:* that his *name* was the only one *among men whereby they might be saved.* It was to Jesus Christ that she had recourse, bedewing with tears the feet of him, who was about to shed his blood for her, and receiving by an anticipated faith the benefit of the death, that he was going to suffer, she renounced dependance on every kind of satisfaction except his.

The third character of the repentance of this sinner is *love.* It shall seem, Jesus Christ would have us consider all her actions as evidences of love, rather than as marks of repentance. *She hath loved much.* These things are not incompatible. Though *perfect love casteth out fear,* yet it doth not cast out grief, for the pardon of sin received by an elect soul, far from diminishing the regret which it feels for committing it, contributes to augment it. The more we love God, the greater the pain felt for offending him. Yea, this love that makes the happiness of angels, this love that inflames seraphims, this love that supports the believer under the most cruel torments, this love is the greatest punishment

of

of a penitent. To have offended the God we love, a God rendered amiable by infinite perfections, a God so tender, so compassionate as to pardon the very sins we lament; this love excites in a soul such emotions of repentance as we should labour in vain to express, unless your hearts, in concert with our mouths, feel in proportion as we describe.

Courage is the fourth character of the repentance, or, if you will, the love of this woman. She doth not say, *What will they say of me?* Ah, my brethren, how often hath this single consideration, *What will they say of me?* been an obstacle to repentance! How many penitents have been discouraged, if not prevented by it! To say all in one word, how many souls hath it plunged into perdition! Persons affected by this, though urged by their consciences to renounce the world and its pleasures, have not been able to get over a fear of the opinions of mankind concerning their conversion. Is any one persuaded of the necessity of living retired? This consideration, *What will be said of me?* terrifies him. It will be said, that I choose to be singular, that I affect to distinguish myself from other men, that I am an enemy to social pleasure. Doth any one desire to be exact in the performance of divine worship? This one consideration, *What will they say of me?* terrifies. They will say, I affect to set myself off for a religious and pious person, I want to impose on the church by a specious outside; they will say, I am a weak man full of fancies and phantoms. Our penitent breaks through every worldly consideration. She goes, "saith a modern author, into a strange house, without being invited, to disturb the pleasure of a festival by an ill-timed sorrow, to cast herself at the feet of the Saviour, without fearing what would be said, either of her past life, or of her present boldness, to make by this extraordinary action a kind of public confession of her dissoluteness and to suffer, for the first punishment of her sins, and for a proof of her conversion, such insults as the pride of the pharisees, and her own ruined reputation would certainly draw upon her*." We have seen the behaviour of the penitent; now let us observe the judgment of the pharisee, *If this man were a prophet, he would have known who, and what manner of woman that is that toucheth him, for she is a* woman of bad fame.

* Flechier, panegyrique de la Magdeleine.

II. The evangelist expressly tells us, that *the pharisee who thus judged*, was the person at whose table Jesus Christ was eating. Whether he were a disciple of Jesus Christ, as is very probable, and as his calling Christ *master* seems to import, or whether he had invited him for other reasons, are questions of little importance, and we will not now examine them. It is certain, our Saviour did often eat with some pharisees, who far from being his disciples were the most implacable enemies of his person and doctrine. If this man were a disciple of Jesus Christ, it should seem very strange that he should doubt the divinity of the mission of Christ, and inwardly refuse him even the quality of a prophet. This pharisee was named Simon, however nothing obliges us either to confound Simon the pharisee with Simon the leper, mentioned in Matthew, and to whose house, Jesus Christ retired, or the history of our text with that related in the last mentioned place, for the circumstances are very different, as it would be easy to prove, had we not subjects more important to propose to you. Whoever this pharisee might be, he said within himself, *This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.* There are four defects in this judgment—a criminal indolence—an extravagant rashness—an intolerable pride—an antichristian cruelty. As we cannot help condemning the opinion of the pharisee for these four defects, so we cannot avoid censuring most of the judgments, that people form on the conduct of their neighbours for the same reasons.

A criminal indolence. That disposition of mind, I allow, is very censurable, which inspires a perpetual attention to the actions of our neighbours, and the motive of it is sufficient to make us abhor the practice. We have reason to think, that the more people pry into the conduct of their neighbours, the more they intend to gratify the barbarous pleasure of defaming them: but there is a disposition far more censurable still, and that is to be always ready to form a rigorous judgment on the least appearances of impropriety, and without taking pains to enquire, whether there be no circumstances that diminish the guilt of an action apparently wrong, nothing that renders it deserving of patience or pity. It doth not belong to us to set ourselves up for judges of the actions of our brethren, to become inquisitors in regard to their manners, and to distribute punishments of sin and rewards of virtue.

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At least, when we usurp this right, let us not aggravate our conduct by the manner, in which we exercise the bold imperious usurpation. Let us not pronounce like iniquitous judges on the actions of those sinners, to whom nature, society, and religion ought to unite us in an affectionate manner. Let us procure exact informations of the causes of such criminals as we summon before our tribunals, and let us not deliver our sentences till we have weighed in a just balance whatever tends to condemn, or to absolve them. This would bridle our malignity. We should be constrained to suspend for a long time our avidity to solicit, and to hasten the death of a sinner. The pleasure of declaring him guilty would be counterbalanced by the pain of trying the cause. Did this pharisee give himself time to examine the whole conduct of the *sinner*, as he called her? Did he enter into all the discussions necessary to determine whether she were a *penitent* sinner, or an *obstinate* sinner; whether she were reformed, or hardened like a reprobate in the practice of sin? No certainly. At the stght of the woman he recollects only the crimes, of which she had been guilty; he did not see her, and he did not choose to see her in any other point of light; he pronounced her character rashly, and he wanted Jesus Christ to be as rash as himself, *this is a woman of bad fame.* Do you not perceive, my brethren, what wicked indolence animated this iniquitous Judge, and perverted his judgment.

The pharisee sinned by rashness. See how he judges of the conduct of Christ in regard to the woman, and of what the woman ought to expect of Jesus Christ, on supposition his mission had been divine, *this man, if he were a prophet would have known who, and what manner of woman* this is *that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.* This opinion supposes, that a prophet ought not in any case to have patience with a woman of this sort. As if it were impossible for a prophet to have any design impenetrable to the eye of a pharisee! As if any one had a right to censure the conduct of a man under the direction of the infinite Spirit! But it is because this man is a prophet, it is because he is more than a prophet, it is because he is the spring, the ocean, from which all the prophets derived the supernatural knowledge of the greatest mysteries of revelation, of predicting events the least likely to come to pass, of seeing into the most distant and impenetrable futurity; it is because of this, that he is capable of forming a just notion of the character of a sinner,

and

and the nature of sin. Yes, none but God can form such a judgment, *Who art thou that judgeth another?* Rom. xiv. 4. Such a judgment depends on so many difficult combinations, that none but an infinite intelligence is capable of making it with exactness.

In order to judge properly of a crime, and a criminal, we must examine the power of the temptations, to which he was exposed, the opportunities given him to avoid it, the force of his natural constitution, the motives that animated him, the resistance he made, the virtues he practised, the talents God gave him, the education he had, what knowledge he had acquired, what conflicts he endured, what remorse he has felt. An exact comparison ought to be made of his sins with his virtues, in order to determine whether sin prevails over virtue, or whether virtue prevails over sin, and on this confronting of evidence a proper idea of the sinner in question must be formed. It must be examined, whether he were seduced by ignorance, or whether he were allured by example, or whether he yielded through weakness, whether dissipation or obstinacy, malice, or contempt of God and his law confirmed him in sin. On the examination of all these articles depends the truth of the judgment, which we form of a fellow creature. There needs nothing but one circumstance, nothing but one degree of more or less in a moral action to change the nature of it, to render it pardonable or irremissible, deserving compassion or horror. Now who is he, who is the man, that is equal to this combination? Accordingly, nothing more directly violates the laws of benevolence and justice than some decisive opinions, which we think proper to give on the characters of our neighbours. It is indeed the office of judges to punish such crimes as disturb the peace of society; and each individual may say to his brethren, this is the path of virtue, that is the road of vice. We have authority indeed to inform them, that *the unrighteous*, that is, *adulterers, idolaters, and fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Indeed we ought to apprize them of danger, and to make them tremble at the sight of the bottomless pit, toward which they are advancing a great pace: but to make such a combination as we have described, and to pronounce such and such people reprobates is rashness, it is to assume all the authority of the sovereign judge.

There is in the opinion of the pharisee a selfish *pride*. What is it then that makes this woman deserve his indignation?

tion? At what tribunal will she be found more odious than other sinners who insolently lift their heads both in the world and the church? It is at the tribunal of pride. Thou superb pharisee! Open thine eyes, see, look, examine, there is within the walls, where thy feast is prepared, there is even at thy table a much greater sinner than this woman, and that sinner is thyself! The sin, of which thou art guilty, and which is more abominable than unchastity, more abominable than adultery, more abominable than prostitution itself, is pride, and above all pharisaical pride. The sin of pride is always hateful in the eyes of God, whether it be pride of honour, pride of fortune, or pride of power: but pride, arising from an opinion of our own righteousness is a direct crime against the divine majesty. On what principles, good God! is such a pride founded! What insolence has he, who is animated with it when he presents himself before God? He appears without fear and dread before that terrible throne, in the presence of which seraphims cover their faces, and the heavens themselves are unclean. He ventures to say to himself, I have done all my duty. I have had as much respect for Almighty God as he deserves. I have had as much zeal and ardour in prayer as the exercise requires. I have so restrained my tongue as to have no word, so directed my mind as to have no thought, so kept my heart as to have no criminal emotion to reproach myself with; or if I have had at any time any frailty, I have so fully made amends for it by my virtue, that I have sufficiently satisfied all the just demands of God. I ask no favour, I want nothing but justice. Let the judge of the world call me before him. Let devouring fire, and eternal flames glitter in my presence. Let the tribunal of retribution be prepared before me. My arm shall save me, and a recollection of my own righteousness shall support me in beholding all these objects. You sufficiently perceive, my brethren, what makes this disposition so hateful, and we need not enlarge on the subject. Humility is the supplement of the virtues of the greatest saints. What application soever we have made to our duty, we have always fallen short of our obligations. We owe so much homage to God as to acknowledge, that we cannot stand before him, unless we be objects of his mercy; and a crime humbly acknowledged is more tolerable in his eyes, than a virtue set forth with pride and parade.

What above all poisons the judgment of the Pharisee is that spirit of *cruelty*, which we have observed. He was content, though

though all the tears of true repentance shed by this woman were shed in vain, and wished, when the woman had recourse to mercy, that God would have assumed in that very instant a shocking character, that is, that he would have *despised the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart*, Psalm li. 17. It is delightful, my brethren, to combat such a fatal pretence. There is a high satisfaction in filling one's mind with just and elevated ideas of divine mercy. All we say against the barbarity of the pharisee will serve to strengthen our faith, when satan endeavours to drive us to despair, as he endeavoured once to destroy us by security, when he magnifies the sins we have committed, as he diminished them, when he tempted us to commit them.

The mercy of God is not an abstract attribute, discovered with great difficulty through shades and darkness by our weak reason: but it is an attribute issuing from that among his other perfections, of which he hath given the most clear and sensible proofs, I mean his goodness. All things preach to us, that God is good. There is no star in the firmament, no wave of the ocean, no production of the earth, no plant in our gardens, no period in our duration, no gifts of his favour, I had almost said no strokes of his anger, which do not contribute to prove this proposition, God is good.

An idea of the mercy of God is not particular to some places, to any age, nation, religion, or sect. Although the empire of truth doth not depend on the number of those that submit to it, there is always some ground to suspect we are deceived, when we are singular in our opinions, and the whole world contradict us: but here the sentiments of all mankind to a certain point agree with ours. All have acknowledged themselves guilty, and all have professed to worship a merciful God. Though mankind have entertained different sentiments on the nature of true repentance, yet all have acknowledged the prerogatives of it.

The idea of the mercy of God is not founded merely on human speculations, subject to error: but it *is founded on clear revelation;* and revelation preaches this mercy far more emphatically than reason. These decisions are not expressed in a vague and obscure manner, so as to leave room for doubt and uncertainty, but they are clear, intelligible, and reiterated.

The decisions of revelation concerning the mercy of God do not leave us to consider it as a doctrine incongruous with the

the whole of religion, or connected with any particular doctrine taught as a part of it: but they *establish it as a capital doctrine*, and on which the whole system of religion turns. What is our religion? It is a dispensation of mercy. It is a supplement to human frailty. It is a refuge for penitent sinners from the pursuits of divine justice. It is a covenant, in which we engage to give ourselves wholly up to the laws of God, and God condescends to accept our imperfect services, and to pardon our sins, how enormous soever they have been, on our genuine repentance. *The promises of mercy* made to us in religion are not restrained to sinners of a particular order, nor to sins of a particular kind: but they *regard all sinners and all sins* of every possible kind. There is no crime so odious, no circumstance so aggravating, no life so obstinately spent in sin, as not to be pitiable and pardonable, when the sinner affectionately and sincerely returns to God. If perseverance in evil, if the sin against the holy Ghost exclude people from mercy, it is because they render repentance impracticable, not because they render it effectual.

The doctrine of divine mercy is not founded on promises to be accomplished at some remote and distant period; but *experience hath justified* these promises. Witness the people of Israel, witness Moses, David, Ahab, Hezekiah, witness Manasseh, Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar. What hath not repentance done? By repentance the people of Israel suspended the judgments of God, when they were ready to fall on them and crush them. By repentance Moses *stood in the breach, and turned away the wrath of God.* By repentance David recovered *the joy of his salvation*, after he had committed the crimes of murder and adultery. By repentance even Ahab obtained a reprieve. By repentance Hezekiah enlarged the term of his life *fifteen years.* By repentance Manasseh saved himself, and his people. By repentance Nineveh obtained a revocation of the decree that a prophet had denounced against it. By repentance Nebuchadnezzar recovered his *understanding*, and his *excellent majesty.* It would be easy to enlarge this list. So many reflections, so many arguments against the cruel pretence of the pharisee.

III. You have seen in our first part the repentance of the immodest woman. In the second you have seen the judgment of the pharisee. Now it remains to consider *the judgment of Jesus Christ* concerning them both. *There was a*

certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. This is our third part.

These words have occasioned a famous question. It hath been asked whether the pardon granted by Jesus Christ to this woman were an effect of her love to Jesus Christ: or whether her love to Jesus Christ were an effect of the pardon she had received from him. The expressions, and the emblems made use of in the text, seem to countenance both these opinions.

The parable proposed by our Saviour favours the latter opinion, that is, that the woman's love to Jesus Christ was an effect of the pardon she had received. *A certain creditor had two debtors, when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty. Which of them will love him most?* The answer is, *He, I suppose, to whom he forgave most.* Who doth not see, that the love of this debtor is an effect of the acquittance from the debt? And as this acquittance here represents the pardon of sin, who doth not see that the love of this woman, and of all others in her condition, is here stated as the effect of this pardon? But the application which Jesus Christ makes of this parable, seems to favour the opposite opinion, that is, that the love here spoken of was the cause and not the effect of pardon. *Seest thou this woman?* Said Jesus Christ to Simon, *I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst*

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not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much. Doth it not seem, that the application of this parable proposes the pardon of the sins of this penitent, as being both the cause and the effect of her love?

This question certainly derives elucidation, because it regards words proceeding from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, and on that account worthy of being studied with the utmost care: but is the question as important as some have pretended? You may find some interpreters ready to excomunicate one another on account of this question, and to accuse their antagonists of subverting all their foundations of true religion. There have been times (and may such times never return) I say, there were times, in which people thought they distinguished their zeal by taking as much pains to envenom controversies, as they ought to have taken to conciliate them; and when they thought to serve true religion by aggravating the errors of opposite religions. On these principles, such as took the words of the text in the first sense taxed the other side with subverting the whole doctrine of free justification: for, said they, if the pardon here granted to the sinner be an effect of her love to Jesus Christ, what become of all the passages of scripture, which say, that grace, and grace alone obtains the remission of sin? They of the opposite sentiment accused the others with subverting all the grounds of morality; for, said they, if this woman's love to Jesus Christ be only an effect of pardon, it clearly follows, that she had been pardoned before she exercised love: but if this be the case, what become of all the passages of the gospel, which make loving God a part of the essence of that faith without which there is no forgiveness? Do you not see, my brethren, in this way of disputing, that unhappy spirit of party, which defends the truth with the arms of falsehood; the spirit that hath caused so many ravages in the church, and which is one of the strongest objections, that the enemy of mankind can oppose against a reunion of religious sentiments, so much desired by all good men? What then, may it not be affirmed in a very sound sense, that we love God before we obtain the pardon of our sins? Have we not declaimed against the doctrine of such divines as have advanced that attrition alone, that is to say, a fear of hell without any degree of love to God was sufficient to open the gates of heaven to a penitent?

Recourse

Recourse to the Saviour of the world, such a recourse as makes the essence of faith, ought it to have no other motive than that of desiring to enjoy the benefits of his sacrifice? Should it not be animated with love to his perfections? But on the other hand, may it not also be said, in a sense most pure, and most evangelically accurate, that true love to God is an effect of the pardon we obtain of him? This love is never more ardent, than when it is kindled at the flame of that, which is testified in our absolution. Is our zeal for the service of God ever more fervent, than when it is produced by a felt reconciliation to him? Are the praises we sing to his glory ever more pure, than when they rise out of such motives as animate glorified saints, when can we say with them, *unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion?* Rev. i. 5. Do different views of this text deserve so much wormwood and gall?

But what is the opinion of the Saviour of the world, and what would he answer to the question proposed? Was the pardon granted to the sinner the cause of her love, or the effect of it? Which of the two ideas ought to prevail in our minds, that in the parable, or that in the application of it? The opinion most generally received in our churches is, that the love of this woman ought to be considered as the effect of her pardon, and this appears to us the most likely, and supported by the best evidence: for the reason, on which this opinion is grounded, seems to us unanswerable. There is neither a critical remark, nor a change of virtue, that can elude the force and evidence of it: *a creditar had two debtors, he forgave the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty, the first will love him most.* Undoubtedly this love is the effect, and not the cause of the acquittance of the debt. On the contrary, the reason on which the second opinion is founded may be easily answered. It is grounded on this expression, *Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much.* The original reading is capable of another sense. Instead of translating *for she loved much,* the words may be rendered without any violence to the Greek text, *her sins are forgiven, and because of that* or *on account of that she loved much.* There are many examples of the original term being taken in this sense. We omit quotations and proofs, only to avoid prolixity.

We must then suppose, that the tears now shed by this woman were not the first, which she had shed at the remembrance

brance of her sins. She had already performed several penitential exercises under a sense of forgiveness, and the repetition of these exercises proceeded both from a sense of gratitude for the sentence pronounced in her favour, and from a desire of receiving a ratification of it. On this account we have not assigned the fear of punishment as a cause of the grief of this penitent, as we ought to have done had we supposed that she had not already obtained forgiveness. Our supposition supported by our comment on the words of the text in my opinion, throw great light on the whole passage. The pharisee is offended because Jesus Christ suffered a woman of bad character to give him so many tokens of her esteem. Jesus Christ makes at the same time an apology both for himself and for the penitent. He tells the pharisee, that the great esteem of this woman proceeds from a sense of the great favours, which she had received from him: that the pharisee thought he had given sufficient proof of his regard for Jesus Christ by receiving him into his house, without any extraordinary demonstrations of zeal, without giving him *water to wash his feet, oil to anoint his head,* or *a kiss* in token of friendship; and that what prevented him from giving greater marks of esteem was his considering himself in the condition of the first debtor, of whom only a little gtatitude was required, because he had been released from an obligation to pay only a small and inconsiderable sum: but that this woman considered herself in the condition of the other debtor, who had been forgiven *five hundred pence*; and that therefore she thought herself obliged to give her creditor the highest marks of esteem. *Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many are forgiven. On this account she hath loved much,* and hath given me all these proofs of affection, which are so far superior to those, which I have received at your table, *for he, to whom little is forgiven, loveth little.*

At length, Jesus Christ turns himself towards the penitent, and, affected at her weeping afresh, repeats his assurances of forgiveness, and appeases that sorrow, which the remembrance of her crimes excited in her heart, though she no longer

longer dreaded punishment. *Go* saith he, *thy sins are forgiven. . . . . Go in peace.*

Ye rigid casuists, who render the path of life strait and difficult; ye, whose terrifying maxims are planted like briars and thorns in the roads to paradise; ye messengers of terror and vengeance, like the dreadful angels who with flaming swords kept guilty man from attempting to return to the garden of Eden; ye who denounce only hell and damnation; come hither and receive instruction. Come and learn how to preach, and how to write, and how to speak in your pulpits to your auditors, and how to comfort on a dying bed a man, whose soul hovers on his lips, and is just departing. See the Saviour of the world; behold with what ease and indulgence he receives this penitent. Scarcely had she begun to weep, scarcely had she touched the feet of Jesus Christ with a little ointment but he crowned her repentance, became her apologist, pardoned during one moment of repentance the excesses of a whole life, and condescended to acknowledge for a member of *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, this woman, and what kind of a woman? A woman guilty perhaps of prostitution, perhaps of adultery, certainly of impurity and fornication. After this, do you violently declaim against conversion, under pretence that it is not effected precisely at such time as you think fit to appoint? Do you yet refuse to publish pardon and forgiveness to that sinner, who indeed hath spent his whole life in sin, but who a few moments before he expires puts on all the appearance of true repentance, covers himself with sorrow and dissolves himself in tears, like the penitent in the text, and assures you that he embraces with the utmost fervour the feet of the Redeemer of mankind?

Do I deceive myself, my brethren? I think I see the audience quicken their attention. This last reflection seems to suit the taste of most of my hearers. I think, I perceive some reaching the right hand of fellowship to me, and congratulating me for publicly abjuring this day a gloomy and melancholy morality, more likely to drive sinners to despair than to reclaim them.

How, my brethren, have we preached to you so many years, and you after all so little acquainted with us as to imagine that we have proposed this reflection with any other design than that of shewing you the folly of it? Or rather are you so little acquainted with your religion, with the spirit of the gospel in general, and with that of my text in

particular

particular, as to derive consequences diametrically opposite to the design of inspired writers? And where, pray, are these barbarous men? Where are these messengers of vengeance and terrors? Where are the casuists, whose maxims render the road to eternal life inaccessible? Who are the men, who thus excite your anger and indignation? What! Is it the man, who hath spent fifty or sixty years in examining the human heart; the man who assures you that, after a thousand diligent and accurate investigations, he finds impenetrable depths of deception in the heart; the man, who, from the difficulty of his own examinations derives arguments to engage you not to be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of your conscience, but to carry the light of the gospel into the darkest recesses of your heart; the man, who advises you over and over again that if you content yourselves with a slight knowledge of yourselves, you must be subject to ten thousand illusions, that you will take the semblance of repentance for repentance itself, that you will think yourselves *rich and increased with goods*, while you are *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, Rev. iii. 17. Is this the rigid casuist, who offends and irritates you?

Perhaps it is the man, who tells you that, in order to assure yourselves that you are in a state of grace, you must love God with an esteem of preference, which will engage you to obey him before all his creatures; the man, who, judging by innumerable evidences that you prefer *serving the creature more than the Creator*, Rom. i. 25. concludes from this sad phenomenon that you have reason to tremble: the man, who advises you to spend at least one week in recollection and retirement before you partake of the Lord's supper: the man, who would have you purify your hands from the blood of your brethren, and your heart burning with hatred and vengeance, and on that account placed in a catalogue of *murderers* hearts, according to the spirit of the gospel: the man, who forbids you to come to the Lord's supper while your wicked courses are only suspended instead of being reformed, and while your cruel exactions are only delayed instead of being entirely left off? Perhaps this is the man! Is this the rigid casuist, who offends and irritates you?

Or, probably, it is the man, who hath attended you three, four, or half a dozen times in fits of sickness, who then saw you covered with tears, every time acknowledging your sins, and always calling heaven and earth to witness your sincere

intention

intention to reform, and to change your conduct, but who hath always seen you immediately on your recovery return to your former course of life, as if you had never shed a tear, never put up a prayer, never made a resolution, never appealed to heaven to attest your sincerity: the man, who concludes from such sad events as these that the resolutions of sick and dying people ought always to be considered as extremely suspicious; the man, who tells you that during all his long and constant attendance on the sick he hath seldom seen one converted on a sick bed (for our parts, my brethren, we are mournful guarantees of this awful fact) the man alarmed at these frightful examples, and slow to publish the grace of God to dying people of a certain class; I say, probably, this is the man, who offends you! Is not this the cruel casuist, who provokes you?

What! Is it the man, who sees the sentence of death written in your face, and your house of clay just going to sink, to whom you appear more like a skeleton than a living body, and who fears every morning lest some messenger should inform him that you was found dead in your bed, who fears all this from your own complaints, what am I saying? from your own complexion, from the alarms of your friends, and from the terrors of your own family; the man, who is shocked to see that all this makes no impression upon you, but that you live a life of dissipation and security, which would be unpardonable in a man, whose firm health might seem to promise him a long life; the man, who cries to you, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, Eph. i. 11. improve the remainder of life, the breath which, though it leaves thee to totter, prevents thy falling down dead. Is this the man, the rigid casuist who offends and irritates you? Such maxims, such discourses, such books, such sermons, are they the systems of morality, which confound you, and drive you to despair?

After all, where are the sinners, whom these casuists have driven to despair? Where are those tormented and distracted consciences? For my part, I see nothing, turn my eyes which way I will, but a deep sleep. I see nothing but security, lethargy, insensibility. How is it possible that the history of our text, that the language of Jesus Christ, *Woman, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace*, that the voice of eternal truth should incline you to raise objections full of error and illusion? Is there no difference between your case and that

of

of this penitent woman, none between Jesus Christ and your casuists? Is there any thing in which they agree? The casuist conversing with this penitent was a prophet, a prophet! he was a God, who, *searched the reins and the hearts*, who saw the bottom of her soul, and who penetrated through all the vails, with which a frail human heart is covered, and beheld the truth of her conversion and the genuineness of her grief: but you, my brethren, you have no such casuists, and we can judge only by external performances, which ascertain your state only on condition that they proceed from your heart. Our penitent lay prostrate at the feet of the Lord of religion, who could save her, if he pleased, by extraordinary means, and who could deliver her from death and hell by a singular effort of power not to be repeated: but your casuists are servants, who act by commission, under express directions and orders, and who have no right to announce peace till you answer the description given in the royal instrument. Such ministers, whatever assurances of grace and pardon they affect to give, ought never to calm your consciences till you have exactly conformed to the orders of their and your sovereign master. Our penitent came to ask pardon in a free and voluntary manner, while she was in perfect health, all her actions were unconstrained and spontaneous: but you wait till death hales you to the tribunal of God, you loiter till the fear of eternal flames fright you away from such pleasures as you continue to love, and to which you would most likely return again, did not God spare you the shame by not giving you an opportunity. The penitent in our text did all she could in her circumstances to express the truth of her repentance, there was no sacrifice so dear that she did not offer, no victim so valuable that she did not stab, if I may use such an expression, with the knife of repentance, no passion so inveterate that she did not eradicate, no marks of love for her Saviour so tender that she did not with all liberality express. Behold her eyes flowing with tears over the feet of Jesus Christ, behold her hair dishevelled, her perfumes poured out, behold all the characters of sincerity, which we have observed in our first part. Is there any one mark of a true conversion, which she does not bear? But you, how many reserves, how many artifices have you? How many actions of your lives, which we must not be allowed to state to you in their true point of light? How many tempers in your hearts, which must not yet

be touched? Here, it is an enemy, the bare sound of whose name would increase your fever, and hasten your death. There, it is an iniquitous acquisition, which you reserve for your son to enable him to take your name with greater honour, and to support with more dignity that vain parade, or rather that dust and smoke in which you have all your life involved yourself. Our penitent never deceived Jesus Christ: but you, you have deceived your casuist a thousand and a thousand times. Our penitent wept over the odious parts of her life, and, far from being too proud to confess her sins, gloried in her confession while she blushed for her crimes: but your eyes, on the contrary, your eyes are yet dry, and it is Jesus Christ, who is weeping at your feet, it is he, who is shedding tears over you, as formerly over Jerusalem, it is he who is saying, O that *thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!* Luke xix. 42. Psal. lxxxi. 13. It is not then to you, but it is to your kind of repentance that sentences of absolution ought to be refused. The repentance of the unchaste woman was exactly conformable to the covenant of grace, to the genius of the gospel, and to the end of the mission of Jesus Christ. Hence from the mouth of the Saviour of the world proceeded, in spite of her former libertinism, in spite of the cruel censure of the pharisee, and in spite of the murmuring of the guests, these comfortable words, *Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee. Woman, thy faith hath saved thee. Go,* depart *in peace.*

Here, my brethren, the evangelist finishes the history of the penitent woman; and here we will finish this discourse. There is, however, one circumstance, which St. Luke hath omitted, and which, if I may venture to say so, I wish he had recorded in the most severe and circumstantial manner. What were the future sentiments of this woman after the courageous steps she had taken at her setting out? What emotions did absolution produce in her soul? What effects in her conscience did this language of the Saviour of the world cause, *Woman, thy sins are forgiven—thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace!* But there is nothing in this silence that ought to surprize us. Her joy was not a circumstance that came under the notice of the historian. In the heart of this frail woman converted and reconciled to God lay this mystery concealed. There was that *peace of God, which passeth*

passeth all understanding, that *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, that *white stone, and that new name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* May you receive it, my brethren, that you may know it! May the grief of a lively and bitter repentance wound your hearts, that mercy may heal and comfort them, and fill them with pleasure and joy! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE VANITY OF ATTEMPTING TO OPPOSE GOD.

PROV. xxi. 30.

There is *no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

HOW mean and despicable soever the human heart since the fall may be, there are always found in it some principles of grandeur and elevation. Like such superb edifices as time hath demolished, it discovers even in its ruins some vestiges of its primitive splendour. Whatever presents itself to man under the idea of great and noble, strikes and dazzles him: whatever presents itself to him under the idea of low and servile, shocks and disgusts him. Accordingly one of the most formidable methods of attacking religion is to exhibit it as a contrivance fit for narrow geniusses and mean souls. One of the most proper means to establish irreligion is to represent it as suited to great and generous minds. To rise above vulgar ideas, to shake off the yoke of conscience, to derive felicity and glory from self, to make fortune, victory, providence, and deity itself yield to human will, these are pretensions, which have I know not what in them to flatter that foolish pride, which an erroneous mind confounds with true magnanimity. We propose to-day, my brethren, to combat these dangerous prejudices, to dissipate all such appearances of grandeur and elevation, and to make you feel the extravagance of all those, who have the audacity to attempt to oppose Almighty God. The wise man calls us to this meditation in the words of the text. *There is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

Perhaps

Perhaps you will accuse us (and we will enter on the subject by examining this objection) perhaps you will accuse us of creating phantoms to combat. Perhaps you will defy us to find among the different classes of idiots, whom society cherishes in its bosom, any one, who hath carried his extravagance so far as to presume to oppose God, or to pretend to constrain him by superior knowledge or power.

My brethren, one of the most difficult subjects in the study of the human heart is, when a man leads a certain course of life, to determine whether he have adopted the extravagant principles on which his conduct is founded, and without which his conduct is the most palpable folly. Take which side we will, whether that he acts on principles, or without them, the case will appear extremely difficult. On the one hand, we can hardly persuade ourselves that an intelligent creature, who is capable of governing a state, regulating a large and extensive commerce, and of arranging a variety of systems, should entertain notions seemingly incompatible with the very least degree of intelligence. On the other hand, we know not how to comprehend, that a course of actions, which is the natural effect of such notions, can subsist without them.

Follow us a moment, my brethren, into these labyrinths of the human heart, or rather, let us endeavour to know ourselves, and to reconcile ourselves to ourselves, and let each of us put a few questions to himself.

I, who have some idea of the perfections of God, and who cannot doubt whether he know the most secret thoughts of my heart, can I promise myself to impose on him in his temple by a painted outside, by a grave deportment, and by a mournful countenance, while my understanding and my affections take no part in religious exercises, while my ideas are confused, and while my passions promise me an immediate indemnity for the violence I have offered them during the few moments of this seeming devotion? But, if I have not this thought, how is it then that I think to obtain the favour of God by exercises of this kind?

I, who was educated in the christian church, can I imagine that God hath less dominion over me when the air is calm, the heavens serene, and the earth firm under my feet, than when the clouds are thick and black, the thunder rolls in the air, the lightning flashes, and the earth seems to open under my feet? But, if I have not adopted this opinion, how comes it to pass that I commit the greatest crimes without remorse

remorse in the first period, and in the second reproach myself for the most pardonable of all my frailties!

I, who am surrounded with the dying and the dead, I, who feel myself dying every day, I, who carry death in my face, who feel it in my veins, who, when I lay on a sick bed a few months ago, and thought myself come to the last moment of life, felt the most violent remorse, I, who would have then given the whole world, had the whole world been at my disposal to have been delivered from sin, can I persuade myself that I shall live here always? Can I even persuade myself that I shall live much longer? Or if I could, that when death shall present itself to me, I shall be exempt from remorse, and that the crimes, which now make the pleasure of my life, will not be the poison of my dying bed? But, if I be incapable of adopting opinions so opposite to what I know by feeling and experience, what am I doing? How is it possible for me to live as if I thought myself immortal, as if I had made a *covenant with death*, and were *at agreement with the grave*, as if I had stifled for ever the feelings of my conscience, as if I were sure of dictating myself the decree of divine justice concerning my own eternal state?

And, not to multiply examples, of which the extravagance of the human mind would furnish a great number, I, whose views are so short, whose knowledge is so confined, whose faculties are so frail, and whose power is so limited, can I promise myself success in opposing the designs of that God, who saith in his word, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure?* Isa. xlvi. 10. Can I promise myself to subdue a God *Great in counsel, and mighty in work*, Jer. xxxii. 19. and to constrain him by superior power? But, if I have not adopted such extravagant thoughts, what mean the obstacles, which I oppose against his will? What signify my plans of felicity, which are diametrically opposite to those, which he hath traced for me in his word? Why do I not direct all my intentions and actions to incorporate in my interest him, whose will is productive and efficient? Why do I not found my system of living on this principle of the wise man, *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

My brethren, explain to us these enigmas, discover yourselves to yourselves, and reconcile yourselves with yourselves. O miserable man! What kind of madness animates thee? Is it that of having conceived these extravagant thoughts, which are alone capable of varnishing over thy conduct?

conduct? Or is it that of acting without thought, which is a sort of raving madness, for even erroneous opinions might seem to thee to apologize for thine actions? O *heart of man, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know thee?* Jer. xvii. 9.

However, the knowledge of this heart so difficult to be known is not entirely unattainable, it is even essential to our happiness. How should we correct ourselves without knowing ourselves? How should we acquire real wisdom without knowing precisely what our folly is, and by what means to get rid of it?

It should seem, we ought to search for a solution of these difficulties in the artifices of our own passions. The passions not only disguise exterior objects, but they disguise even our own thoughts, they persuade us that we do not think what we do think, and in this manner they confirm us in the most extravagant notions, the absurdity of which we could not help seeing were we dispassionate and cool. The work, therefore, to which we ought most seriously to apply ourselves, is to take off such coverings as our passions throw over our opinions, and which prevent our seeing that we think as we do; to this important work I shall address myself in the remaining part of this discourse.

A modern philosopher hath founded on this principle the whole of his system on the difference between right and wrong. He says, justice consists in affirming that a thing is what it is, and injustice in denying it. He explains this thought by another, that is, that we affirm and deny not only by words, but also by actions, and that the second manner of affirming or denying is more express and decisive than the first. I will not examine whether this philosopher have not carried his principles too far: but I am going to prove by the actions of men that they pretend to oppose God, and that they set four obstacles against his will, their grandeur, their policy, their pleasures, and their stoical obstinacy. I am going to prove at the same time to worldly politicians and grandees, to voluptuous and stoical people, that to undertake to resist God is the heighth of extravagance. *There is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

I. We will consider our text in regard to *worldly grandeur*. We sometimes see those, who are called grandees in the world, resist God, pretend to compel him by superior force,

force, or by greater knowledge. And whom do we intend to characterize? Is it a Pharaoh, who boldly demands, *who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Is it a Senacherib, who uttered this insolent language, *Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, the Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Who are they amongst all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* Is it a Nebuchadnezzar, to whom a prophet puts this mortifying question, *How art thou fallen from heaven, thou day star, thou son of the morning? Thou who didst weaken the nations, hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north, I will be like the most high,* Isa. xxxvi. 18. 20. and chap. xiv. 12—14.

Is it a Nero, who could hear without trembling those blasphemous elogies, "If the fates had no other methods of placing Nero on the throne than those civil wars, which deluged Rome with blood, ye gods, we are content; the most atrocious crimes, the most sanguinary executions are agreeable at this price. Lift up your eyes, Cæsar, and choose your place among the immortal gods, take the thunder of Jupiter, and succeed the father of gods and men. Mount the chariot of the sun, and give the world light, all the gods will count it felicity and glory to submit to thy laws, and to give up their place and their power to thee."

But nature produces few such monsters. Our age hath too much knowledge, and our manners are too refined to suffer such plain and open declarations. Yet how often is grandeur even now in our times a patent for insolence against God? What, for example, is that perpetual parade of the great, and that vain ostentation, with which they dazzle the eyes of their dependents, and of which they avail themselves to rob God of the hearts of men? What is that haughty confidence, which they place in their forces, after they have guarded their cities, built forts, and filled their treasures, they live in security, even though they have provoked God by acts of the most crying injustice, by the most barbarous executions, and by the most execrable blasphemies? Whence that immoderate avidity of praise, which

makes them nourish themselves with the incense of a vile flatterer, and live on the titles of immortals, invincibles, arbiters of peace and war? Whence that contempt of religion, and that spirit of impiety and prophaneness, which usually reigns in the hearts of princes? Whence that dominion, which some of them exercise over conscience, and those laws, which they dare to give mankind to serve God against their own convictions, to form ideas of him, which they think injurious to his majesty, to perform a worship, which they think contrary to his express commands, and to profess a religion directly opposite to what they themselves believe to be the true religion of Jesus Christ? Whence are all these dispositions, and what are all these actions? My brethren, open the folds of the human heart, take off the coverings under which the turpitude is concealed, penetrate into the principles of mens actions, and you will find that to oppose God, to pretend to controul him by a superior power is not a disposition of mind so rare as you might at first sight have imagined. You see the great worldling makes his opulence, his titles, his grandeur, his navy, his army a force to set against almighty God. But what is such a man? An idiot. What are his titles and grandeurs, his navies and armies, and all his opulence? What is all this? A little chaff, a little dust, a nothing in the presence of the omnipotent God.

I recollect here a piece of instruction which a king one day gave his courtiers. They were calling him lord of earth and sea. The monarch put on his robes, and caused himself to be carried to the sea shore. There he sat on the beach, and said to the waves, the land on which I sit is mine, and you, sea, you are under my dominion, I command you to respect your king, and to come no further." The waves deaf to his voice came rolling forward, the first wetted his feet, the second seemed to threaten to carry him away. *There*, said the king to his courtiers, *see what a lord I am of earth and sea.* Great lesson to all worldly potentates! Insignificant man, put on thy crown, dazzle thyself first with the glitter of it, and then try to beguile the eyes of others, deck thyself in thy royal robes, try thy strength, shew us the extent of thy power, say to winds and waves, to fortune, and sickness, and death, I command you to stop, and to respect your king.

O think of the glorious *attributes*, the sublime ideas, the deep counsels, and the abundant power of that God, whom thou opposest. *He stretcheth out the north over the empty place,*

place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. He meteth out heaven with a span, and comprehendeth the dust of the earth in a measure. He weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. Behold all nations, are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance. All before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. He bringeth princes to nothing, he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity, Job xxvi. 7; 8. 11, 12. and Isa. xl. 12, 22, 15, 17, 23.

Think of thy *soul*, thou wilt find nothing there but infirmity and ignorance. Thou art confined as a man, and more confined still as a great man, for grandeur usually contracts the limits of knowledge and improvement.

Think of the *author* of those advantages, which swell thee with pride. Thou art indebted for them to that very being, whom thou pretendest to resist. It is his breath that animates thee, his arm upholds thee, his earth supports thee, his food nourishes thee, and it is his air, which thou borrowest to breathe.

Think what mortal *blows* of just vengeance God hath given to some insolent creatures, who presumptuously opposed his majesty. So perished Antiochus, who, in the language of the book of Maccabees, a *little afore thought he might command the waves of the sea, and weigh the high mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground, so that the worms rose up out of his body, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to all his army*, 2 Mac. ix. 8—10. So perished Herod; "His bowels were consumed with an inward fire. His entrails were full of ulcers. The stench of his breath infected his room and drove away all his family." So perished Maximinus, of whom Lactantius gives this frightful account; "The wound gained his vitals, there vermin ingendered, the palace and the city were infected, his body putrified, the more his sores were cleansed the more innumerable were the swarms of vermin that proceeded from them, of which his entrails were an inexhaustible source*."

* Lactant. libro de mortib. persecutor. C. xxxiii.

Think of thine *end*. Look through the deceitful splendour that covers thee. See the weakness of thine organs, behold thy hands already shaking; thy knees already trembling, thy head, all crowned and glittering as it is, bending toward that earth from which it was taken, and to which it will presently return. Imagine thyself dying, cold, pale, groaning, and vainly calling to thine assistance thy courtiers, thy sceptre and thy crown. Is this the immortal man? This the arm, that ruled the fate of whole nations? Is this the potentate, whose looks made the world tremble? Oh! how eloquent his humility, my brethren, to him who is willing to hear it! Oh! how sufficient in motives is the school of humility to him who is willing to be taught there! How, how can a creature so mean, so vile, so limited, so frail, so momentary as man, how can he possibly oppose Almighty God? How can he resist his power? *Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? But thou shalt be a man and no god in the hand of him that slayeth thee*, Ezek. xxviii. 9.

II. *Wordly policy* is a second obstacle, which some men set against the laws of heaven, and by which they discover a disposition to resist God, and to compel him by superior force. Had the man, of whom I speak, other ideas, he would lay down as first principles and grounds of action—that the wisest maxims of state are those of religion—that the best we can do for society is to render God propitious—and that the happiest people are they *whose God is the Lord*. When counsels were held to deliberate on peace or war, such a man would do from religious principle what was anciently done at Rome from the mere dictates of natural justice. It would be examined not only whether it would be advantageous to make war in the present conjuncture, but whether it were just; whether it proceeded from an insatiable desire of dominion and wealth, or from the right, which all mankind have to guard and defend themselves. When the question was whether any one should be invested with magistratical authority, such a man would examine with as much care the religious principles as the political virtues of the candidate for power; he would not consider whether he were able to practise crimes of state, which have been long successful, but whether he inviolably respected the laws of religion, the exercise of which soon or late must necessarily crown its adherents with prosperity and victory.

Never

Never would he assist in placing at the head of a political body a blasphemer or an atheist.

But when we see men pursue a conduct directly opposite to this, when we see men always forget that they are christians, when they deliberate on the public good, and lay aside, if I may be allowed to speak so, faith, conscience and the gospel at the door of the council room; when we see a certain disdainful air, a look of affected pity put on at the proposals of such as wish to direct the public good by the principles of religion; when we see people of this character pretend by their prudence to avert public calamities; have we not a right to say of such men, that they resist God, and pretend to compel him by superior power?

But what are such men? Idiots. With your pernicious maxims you banish religion and piety, and by so doing deprive yourselves of all the advantages, which you might have derived from the inclinations of a people well disposed to be religious and good. Should the people live by the rules of religion, they would pay taxes with fidelity, obey their governors with respect, generously prefer the public good before private interest, and so establish such a correspondence between subject and sovereign as can alone render states prosperous and happy: but while they see, that their masters wander out of this right road, they act toward you, as you do towards God, they employ their power to resist your authority, and their knowledge and address to illude your laws.

With these pernicious maxims you render social interest a chimera. You consider a public body as a being permanent and in a manner eternal, which ought to employ itself about what concerns it as a public body: but you never recollect that this public body is composed of only individuals, one of whom has only a few years, and another only a few months to live in this world, so that the real interest of such as compose this body hath no relation to the duration of the body, a duration which individuals cannot expect, and which regards them only to the end of their own days. You labour to promote a general interest, in which individuals have only a very small share, and you act against the true interest of each, which consists not in consolidating a world, that he is just quitting, but in learning to pass through it with dignity, and to leave it with ease.

With these pernicious maxims you keep memorable catastrophes out of sight, those terrible subversions of wicked societies;

societies; as the history of the old world, that of Sodom and Gomorrah, that of the kingdom of Judah, that of the ten tribes, that of Babylon, that of the seven eastern churches, and that of many others, whose sad but edifying ruins should always be before our eyes.

With these pernicious maxims, for the sake of a few trifling directions which you give society for maxims of state, you deprive us of the powerful protection of a God, who would himself sit at the helm; you raise his justice against us, you put into his hands thunder and lightning to destroy us, and, instead of being our parents and guides, you are disturbers of the state, and the most implacable enemies of sound civil polity.

O *pillar of a cloud!* O *wisdom that is from above!* Animate, for ever animate the conductors of this people, preside in their councils, march at the head of their armies, sanctify their reflections, and engrave for ever on their souls this maxim of my text, that *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord,* Jam. iii. 17.

III. Our third article concerns the *voluptuous.* One of the most inviolable laws of God is, that felicity should be the reward of virtue, and misery the punishment of vice. What does a voluptuous man oppose against the execution of this law? Noise, company, diversions, refinements of lasciviousness. In these he intrenches himself, and defies us to force him thence. While the catechumen is studiously employing himself to clear away the difficulties, and to determine the important questions, on which all his future hopes depend; while the believer is striving against the stream, and endeavouring to subdue his own passions; while the penitent feels and bows under the weighty remembrance of his sins; while the martyr falls a victim to the rage of his persecutors; the voluptuary feels a joy, which he thinks unalterable, and creates a kind of fools paradise, in which he pretends to brave God, and to be happy in spite of him, whose sovereign command condemns him to misery. Absurd tranquillity! Senseless security! I appeal to reason, I appeal to conscience, I appeal to old age, I appeal to death, I appeal to judgment.

What a system is that of the voluptuary, when it is examined at the bar of *reason!* There he is taught, that he owes his existence to a Supreme Being, and that he is under infinite obligations to him; there he is made to feel that he hath no assurance of living four days, that within fifteen, twenty,

twenty, or thirty years he will be taken out of this world, and that at the end of this term there will be before him nothing but death, eternity and hell. He knows nothing against this, he agrees to all this, he inwardly feels demonstrations of all this: but, instead of trying to avoid the evil day, he tries to forget it; and, as if the existence of beings depended on the attention we paid to them, he imagines he hath annihilated these dreadful objects, because he hath found the art of obliterating them from his memory.

What a system is that of the voluptuary, when it is examined at the tribunal of *conscience!* For, in fact, whatever efforts may be employed to drown the voice of conscience, it sometimes roars and will be heard. Even a depraved conscience hath a kind of periodical power, it cannot always be intoxicated with worldly pleasure. Belshazar, on a certain festal day, was sitting at table with his court. In order to insult the God of Israel, he ordered the sacred vessels, which his father had brought away from the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought into company, that he and *his princes, his wives and his concubines might drink therein, and praise the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.* All on a sudden *his countenance changes, and his thoughts trouble him so that the joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against another*, Dan. v. 2. 4. 6. thus proving the truth of what the wise man observes, that *the wicked flee when no man pursueth*, Prov. xxviii. 1. Unhappy king! What is the occasion of all this terror and fear? Dost thou see a sword hanging over thee by a single thread, and ready to fall on thee and cut thee asunder? Have thine enemies, who who are besieging the capital, found a way into it? Does the earth reel under thy feet? Is hell opening to thine eyes? Do the infernal furies surround thee, and cause the serpents on their heads to hiss in thine ears? No: but a *hand* is *writing over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall*, ver. 5. And what have you to fear from that hand? You are not acquainted with the characters. Perhaps the writing is an encomium on thee. Perhaps it is an oracle foretelling thee some new acquisition of splendor and glory. Why, of two senses, of which the writing is capable, dost thou imagine the worst? My brethren, behold the solution of this difficulty. These *fingers of a man's hand* are not alone: the finger of God accompanies them. The subject is not only written on the wall of the royal palace: but it is also inscribed on the heart of

of the king. His eyes could not read the characters, but his conscience knew how to explain them. Ah! Miserable hypocrites! cease calling for astrologers; leave off consulting magicians and chaldeans. Listen to your own heart. The expositor is within thee, and thy conscience will tell thee more than all the wise men in thy kingdom.

What a system is that of a voluptuary considered in the *decline of life!* A voluptuous man, when his organs are become feeble, and his faculties worn out, finds he hath outlived his felicity, yet he looks after the gods, of which time hath despoiled him, and in vain expects that voluptuousness can rid him of the painful reflections, which torment and excruciate him.

What a system is that of a voluptuary considered in regard to *death and future punishment!* These, certainly, ought to alarm all that expect them: but they ought above all to terrify a voluptuous man. What will be the sensibility of such a man? What will be his despair, when he shall pass from a bed of down to all pervading pain, from pleasure to eternal fire, from excessive lasciviousness to chains of darkness, from the company of those, who ministered to his voluptuousness to that of the executioners of divine vengeance.

IV. In fine, a *stoical obstinacy* is the fourth obstacle, which some place against the purposes of God. Would you see this hardiness represented in the most insolent language? Would you see how far men have been able to carry their extravagance on this article. Hear one of the most admired of the ancient philosophers, but the least worthy of admiration. Hear what an idea he gives of his wise man. "There are neither walls nor towers, which battering rams cannot subvert: but there are no machines that can shake the soul of a wise man. Do not compare him to the walls of Babylon, which Alexander knew how to destroy; nor to those of Carthage and Numantia, which human power subverted. Do not compare him either to the citadel or to the capital, where the marks of enemies attempting to render themselves masters of them are yet to be seen. Arrows shot at the sun never reach him. Sacrileges committed in the temples of the deity, by breaking in pieces the symbols, and by subverting the edifices, never affect him. What am I saying, the gods themselves may be buried in the ruins of their own temples: but the wise man never can; or, could he be overwhelmed,

whelmed, he could suffer no damage. Jupiter hath nothing more than the wise man, except his immortality. But the wise man, in his turn hath this superiority, that he is perfectly happy during the short space of this life. In this he is as much greater than Jupiter as it is more glorious to compress all happiness into a narrow space than to diffuse it through one more considerable, and to possess as much felicity in one single instant as the greatest of the gods enjoy in eternity."

Who would believe, my brethren, that men, who were formerly the admiration of the world had been able to oppose such crude and fanciful ideas against all the evidences of their depravity and dependence? Who could conceive, that they seriously set these against sickness, poverty, pain, conscience, death, the grave, the punishment of hell, and the majesty of God?

Are there any of this extravagant sect yet subsisting? Hath Zeno any disciples now? Are there any who yet follow and revere the doctrine of the portico? Yes, my brethren, there are yet people, who under another name maintain the same sentiments. I know not whence the evil comes, whether from the air we breathe in these provinces, or from our diet, or from any other cause; I cannot tell whether dullness of fancy produce in us what excessive vivacity produces in other countries; but it should seem, we have as many of this sort among us as there are in other places. We have people, who affect an unshaken firmness, who glory in preserving their tranquillity under all the extremes of fortune; people who behold the king of terrors with intrepidity, and who laugh at the horrors of death, alike immoveable in the hearing of the most alarming truths, the most terrible descriptions of futurity, censures the most sharp, and threatnings the most dreadful. And whence do they derive this calm intrepidity? From vows addressed to heaven? No. Is it from the progress they have made in religion? Not at all. Is it from the clearness of a close, connected, and evident system? Nothing of all this. Whence then do they derive these sentiments? From I know not what secret pride, from I know not what absurd gravity, from I know not what infernal inflexibility, from a sort of stoical, or shall I rather call it brutal philosophy, which they have revived. We ingenuously acknowledge, that a sight of people of this character always excites emulation in us, at least it leads us to deplore the inefficacy of religion in

some people's minds. Truth with all its brightness, virtue with all its graces, religion with its evidences, eternity with its demonstrations, celestial felicity with its pomp, all these things can hardly hold some trembling christians steady to their profession, who yet seem to adhere to Jesus Christ: while these men without light, without proofs, without demonstration, without certainty, yea without hope discover a tranquillity, which we should congratulate ourselves for producing even after we have spent twenty or thirty years in the ministry.

But how fair soever this exterior may seem, how insurmountable soever this difficulty may appear, how strong soever it may seem to prevent the judgments of God, and to dispose of the terrors, which they naturally excite in the conscience, it is an effort of wickedness easily defeated, and although this fourth way seems to surpass the three others in wisdom, yet it actually goes beyond them all in absurdity and extravagance.

Do we impose on people of this kind? Let them tell us on what their tranquillity is founded. Allowing the circumstances, in which we now are, there can be only two ways of acquiring tranquillity in prospect of death. The first is, to prove that religion is a human contrivance; that all we propose concerning a future state, a heaven and a hell, and concerning the means of escaping the last and enjoying the first is either exaggerated or imaginary. The second is, to bring full proof that we have performed the duties, to which religion hath annexed a promise of freedom from misery, and the possession of eternal felicity. In which class shall I place the man I have been describing?

He would complain of injustice should I put him in the first class. He always professed himself a christian. He hath all his life long been present at public worship, and hath partaken of our sacraments. In any case, if he be an infidel, he is a mere idiot. Distracted with the cares of life, he hath never made such enquiries as are absolutely necessary to refute the system of religion, even supposing the system could be refuted; and I pledge myself, let him take which side he will, to silence him, whether he undertake to attack religion, or to defend it, so grosly ignorant is he of every thing that belongs to the subject.

Hath he then obtained satisfaction by the second method? A man, who hath set his heart entirely at ease, because he can give full proof that he hath performed the duties, to which

which the gospel hath annexed a promise of exemption from future misery, and a possession of endless felicity; such a man is truly happy; he hath arrived at the highest degree of felicity, that can possibly be obtained in this valley of tears; for his tranquillity is that *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, of which our scripture speaks. It is that *peace of God, which passeth all understanding*. It is the *white stone, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it*. But is this the condition of the man, whom I have been describing?

On what conditions does religion promise eternal life to a statesman? On condition that he always set before your eyes that king, *by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice*, Prov. viii. 15. on condition that he doth not regard the appearance of persons; on condition that he take no bribes, which God declares *blind the eyes*. You have not performed this condition, you are intoxicated with your own grandeur, you are inaccessible to the cries of widows and orphans, you are flexible to presents, though you know they are given you to be returned in actions disguised under the fair names of impartiality and equity. And are you in a state of tranquillity?

On what condition does the gospel promise eternal felicity to a counsellor? On condition that he perform the oath administered to him when he entered on his profession, an oath in which he called God to witness that he would never plead any but just causes. You have not performed this condition, you have been known to take either side of a cause, yea both, when your interest required it, you have been seen exercising your talents in varnishing over such causes as you durst not state in their true point of light, and straining every nerve to mislead the judges. And you are in a state of tranquillity, and will be so the day you die.

On what condition does religion promise eternal happiness to a man in possession of property unjustly acquired? On condition of his making restitution. You are in this case, I mean in the case of him, who holds such property, for *the stone crieth out of the walls of your houses, and the beam out of the timber witnesses against you. The hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries are entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts*, Hab. ii. 11. Jam. v. 4. You have not made restitution, you will not even suffer us to utter this frightful word, restitution; you are going to transmit this accursed patrimony to your chil-

dren; and you too are tranquil and easy! What! Are you also a philosopher? are you also a stoic? Extravagant stoicism, senseless philosophy, absurd tranquillity! Is it thus you pretend to oppose almighty God! *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

Let us conclude. The most reasonable part, that an intelligent creature can take, is to submit to his Creator. Happy, if it were as easy, to affect our hearts, as it is to convince our judgments of this article! Happy, if the heart never appealed from the dictates of reason, and if the passions had no distinct and separate system! A system the more dangerous because reason is present only in the few moments of our attention; wheaeas the other, on the contrary, always carries us away when we follow the suggestions of our passions, that is in the usual course of our lives.

My brethren, let us act like intelligent creatures, let us form a just idea of sin, let us always have before our eyes this image, which the wise man hath given us, and which is so proper to demonstrate to us the extravagance of it. Let us remember that a sinner is an idiot, who attempts to resist God, who opposes his laws, and who undertakes to counteract him by superior skill or force. Let us seek in a reconciliation to God those succours, of which our silly pride offers us only an appearance. But you love grandeur, you are struck with the courage of a man, who opposes God, and who pretends to resist and triumph over him. Well, consider the path we open to you in this point of light. This Almighty God is armed against you, his anger is ready to crush you to atoms, his thunder roars, his lightnings flash in your eyes, his fire is kindled, and his justice requires your destruction: but there is an art of disarming God. This was the skill of Jacob, who wept and prayed, and said, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*, Gen. xxxii. 26. This was the wisdom of Moses, who stood in the breach to turn away the wrath of heaven, of that Moses to whom God said, *Let me alone, that I may consume this people*, Exod. xxxii. 10. but Moses said, *O forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written*, ver. 32. This is the art, which Jesus Christ taught us, *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*, Matt. xi. 12. These are powerful weapons, which God will not oppose. These are arms always effectual. This was the method, which the Lord formerly taught his people by the ministry of Isaiah,

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Who would set briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. O, let him take hold of my strength, he may keep peace with me, he shall keep peace with me, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Let us not make a vain parade before God of fanciful greatness, let us rather appear in our own insignificance, let us shew ourselves as we are, *poor, miserable, blind, and naked.* Let us not pretend to surprize him with the wisdom of our counsels: but let us endeavour to move his compassion by acknowledging our uncertainty, our darkness, our ignorance, our superficial thoughts on the government of the world, and on that of our families. Let us not appear before him intoxicated with pleasure, but mortified, contrite, bowed down under the weight of our sins, prostrate in the dust, and wounded with sincere repentance. Let us not resist him with a brutal security, but let us lay before him our timidity, our doubts and our fears. Let us conjure him, by the sad objects of our frailty, and insignificance to pity our condition. These are invincible arms, these are impenetrable shields, this is the infallible art of prevailing with Almighty God. May he deign to teach us how to exercise it! May he condescend to crown our efforts with success! Amen! To him be honour and glory both now and for ever! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

IMAGINARY SCHEMES OF HAPPINESS.

ECCLESIASTES i. 9.

The thing that hath been, is that *which shall be; and that, which is done,* is *that which shall be done: and* there is *no new thing under the sun.*

THERE are few people in the world, who do not form in their minds agreeable plans of happiness, made up of future flattering prospects, which have no foundation except in their own fancies. This disposition of mind, which is so general among mankind, is also one of the principal causes of their immoderate desire to live. Some have questioned whether any mortal were ever so happy as to choose to live his life over again, on condition of passing through all the events, through which he had gone from his birth to his last hour. Without investigating this problem, I venture to affirm, that mankind would be much less attached to the world, if they did not flatter themselves with the hope of enjoying more pleasure than they had hitherto experienced. A child fancies, that as soon as he shall arrive at a certain stature, he shall enjoy more pleasure than he hath enjoyed in his childhood, and this is pardonable in a child. The youth persuades himself that men, who are what they call settled in the world, are incomparably more happy than young people can be at his age. While we think ourselves condemned to live single, solitude seems intolerable; and when we have associated ourselves with others, we regret the happy days we spent in the tranquillity of solitude. Thus we go on from fancy to fancy, and from one chimera to another, till death arrives, subverts all our imaginary projects of happiness, and makes us know by our own experience what the experience

of

of others might have fully taught us long before, that is, that the whole world is vanity, that every state, all ages, and all conditions have inconveniences peculiar to themselves, and one which is common to them all, I mean a character of disproportion to our hearts; so that by changing our situation we often do no more than change our kind of infelicity.

Of this vanity I would endeavour to-day to convince you, my brethren, and I dedicate this discourse to the destruction of imaginary schemes of happiness. *The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.* It is not unjust to reason thus; as I have hitherto found nothing but vanity in all the enjoyments of the world, which I singled out for myself as most likely to make me happy, this experience of what hath been shall guide me in my expectations of what shall be. I have reason to suppose that the world can offer me no object in future different in its nature from those, which I have always hitherto found inadequate to my happiness. *All* the past *hath been vanity*, and *all* the future *will be vanity* to the end of the world. *The thing that hath been, is that which shall be: and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.*

In order to enter into the views of the wise man, we must observe three things; first, the *error* which he attacks—next, the *arms* he makes use of—and lastly, the *end* he proposes in attacking it. Suffer me, before I enter on the discussion of these articles, to give you a more exact idea of my meaning, and to lead you more fully into the plan of this discourse.

In the *first* article I shall try to develop the idea of Solomon, and to engage you to enter into the most intricate labyrinths of your own hearts, and to make you acknowledge that we are all, more or less, prejudiced in favour of this bewitching opinion, that future life will produce something more solid and satisfactory than we have hitherto found, especially if we obtain some advantages, which we have long had in prospect, but which we have not yet been able to obtain.

In the *second* part we will prove, that even supposing the happiest revolutions in our favour, we should be deceived in our hopes, so that whether they happen or not we shall be brought to acknowledge that there is nothing in this world capable of rendering us perfectly happy.

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In the *last* place we shall conclude from these two principles with the wise man, that, though a reasonable creature may be allowed to better his condition, and to obtain a happier state in this world than the past or the present, yet he ought by no means to promise himself much success, and that, in one word, it is in God alone, and in the hope of a future state of happiness in another life, that we ought to place our felicity.

I. Let us first of all determine the sense of the text, and examine what *error* the wise man attacks. We have already explained what idea we affix to his expressions, but as they are vague and indeterminate, they must be first of all restrained by the nature of the subjects, of which he speaks, and secondly explained by the place they occupy.

1. When the wise man says *that which hath been, is that which shall be*, he doth not mean to attribute a character of firmness and consistency to such events as concern us. No man ever knew better than he the transitoriness of human affairs: but it is not necessary to our knowledge of the subject to occupy a post as eminent as that which he held; for a superficial view of the condition of public bodies, and of that of individuals will be sufficient to open a wide field to our reflections.

The condition of public bodies is usually founded on materials so brittle, that there is no room to be astonished at sudden and perpetual variations. A spectator young in his observations, and distant from the central point, is amazed at the rapid changes, which he beholds suddenly take place like the creation of new worlds; he supposed whole ages must pass in removing those enormous masses, public bodies, and in turning the current of prosperity and victory. But should he penetrate into the spring of events, he would soon find that a very small and inconsiderable point gave motion to that wheel, on which turned public prosperity, and public adversity, and which gave a whole nation a new and different appearance.

Sometimes all the wise counsels, the cool deliberations, the well concerted plans, that constitute the prosperity of a nation, proceed from the prudence of one single head. This one head represses the venality of one, and the animosity of another, the ambition of this man, and the avarice of that. Into this head one single vapour ascends; prosperity relaxes it? death strikes it off. Instantly a new world arises,

and then that which was is no more, for with that head well concerted measures, cool deliberations, and wise counsels all vanished away.

Sometimes the rare qualities of one single general animate a whole army, and assign to each member of it his proper work, to the prudent a station which requires prudence, to the intrepid a station which requires courage, and even to an idiot a place where folly and absurdity have their use. From these rare qualities a state derives the glory of rapid marches, bold sieges, desperate attacks, complete victories and shouts of triumph. This general finishes his life by his own folly, or is supplanted by a party cabal, or sinks into inaction on the soft down of his own panegyrics, or a fatal bullet, shot at random and without design penetrates the heart of this noble and generous man. Instantly a new world appears, and that which was is no more; for with this general victory and songs of triumph expired.

Sometimes the ability and virtue of one single favourite enable him to direct the genius of a prince, to dissipate the inchantments of adulation, to become an antidote against the poison of flattery, to teach him to distinguish sober applause from self-interested encomiums, and to render him accessible to the complaints of widows and orphans. This favourite sinks into disfavour, and an artful rival steps into his place. Rehoboam neglected the advice of prudent old counsellors, and followed the suggestions of inconsiderate youth. Any one of these changes produces a thousand consequences.

It would be easy to repeat of individuals what we have affirmed of public bodies, that is, that the world is a theatre in perpetual motion, and always varying; that every day, and in a manner, every moment exhibits some new scene, some change of decoration. It is then clear, that the proposition in the text ought to be restrained to the nature of the subject spoken of.

2. But these indeterminate words, *that which hath been shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun*, must be explained by the *place* they occupy. Our chief guide to determine the meaning of some vague propositions of an author is to examine where he placed them, and what precise idea he had in his mind when he wrote them. By observing this rule we find, that the same phrases are often taken in different senses. Without quoting other examples, we observe, that the words under consideration occur twice in

in this book, once in the text, and again in the fifteenth verse of the third chapter, where we are told, *that which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been.* However, it is certain, that these two sentences so much alike in sound have a very different meaning. The design of Solomon in the latter passage is to inform such persons, as tremble at the least temptation, that they were mistaken. We complain, say they, that God exercises our virtue more than he does that of other men, and though he allows these rude attacks, yet he doth not afford us strength sufficient to resist them. No, saith Solomon, whatever variety there may appear to be in the conduct of God towards men, yet there is always a certain uniformity, that characterizes his conduct. Indeed he giveth five talents to one, while he commits only one talent to another, and in this respect there is a variety: but he doth not require of him, to whom he hath committed one talent, an account of more than one talent, while he calls him to account for five talents, to whom he committed five, and in this respect there is a perfect uniformity in his conduct; and so of the rest. *I know that whatsoever God doth,* (these are the words of Solomon) *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and God doth it that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and God requireth that which is past.*

But in our text the same words, *the thing that hath been is that which shall be,* have a different meaning. It is evident, by the place, in which the wise man put them, that he intended to decry the good things of this life, to make the vanity of them appear, and to convince mankind, that no revolutions can change the character of vanity essential to their condition. The connection of the words establishes the meaning. From what events do mankind expect, saith he, to procure to themselves a firm and solid happiness in this life? What efforts can be hereafter made greater than what have been made? Yet *what profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh,* but the world continueth the same, the *sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north, and the wind returneth again according to his*

circuits. All rivers run into the sea, and whence they come thither they return again, ver. 3—7. The moral world exactly resembles the world of nature. It is in vain to expect any vicissitude that will render the remaining part of life more happy than the former. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing*, ver. 8. or, as it may be translated *with considering; nor the ear filled with hearing*, or as the words may be rendered, *the ear never ceases to listen**. But this contention which makes us stretch all our faculties in search of something to fill the void, that all past and present enjoyments have left in our hearts, this doth not change the nature of things; all will be *vanity* in future, as all have been *vanity* in former times. *The thing which hath been, is that which shall be; and that, which is done, is that which hath been done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

Weigh these words, my brethren, *the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* It seems, this is precisely the disposition of mind, which the wise man attacks, a disposition, as I said before, common to mankind, and one of the principal causes of our immoderate attachment to life. Let each of us study his own heart, and let us examine whether we know the portrait, that we are now going to try to sketch.

We often declaim on the vanity of the world: but our declamations are not unfrequently more intended to indemnify pride, than to express the genuine feelings of a heart disabused. We love to declaim against advantages out of our reach, and we take vengeance on them for not coming within our grasp by exclaiming against them. But such ideas as these, how just soever they may appear, are only superficial. It would be a fatal error indeed to persuade ourselves that we are really undeceived, and consider the world in a true point of light on this account.

A dying man is all taken up with his then present condition. A desire of health occupies all the capacity of his soul: but he does not observe that, should he recover, he would find the same troubles and pains as before, and on account of which he has felt so much uneasiness, and shed so many tears.

* Visus et auditus synecdochice ponuntur pro omnibus quibus voluptatem percipimus. Horum autem sensuum meminit, tum quia curiosissimi sunt; tum quia et minimo labore et maxima cum delectatione exercentur, Poli Synops. in loc. R.

tears. A man waiting on the coast to go abroad wishes for nothing but a fair wind, and he does not think that he shall find other, and perhaps greater calamities in another climate than those, which compelled him to quit his native soil. This is an image of us all. Our minds are limited, and when an object presents itself to us we consider it only in one point of view, in other lights we are not competent to the examination of it.

Hence the interest we take in some events, in the revolutions of states, the phenomena of nature, and the change of seasons; hence that perpetual desire of change; hence sportive phantoms incessantly created by our imaginations; hence chimerical projects for ever revolving in our minds, or, as the wise man expresseth it, *Eyes never satisfied with seeing, and ears never filled with hearing.* O, saith one, could I get cured of this illness, which renders life a burthen—could I, says another, get free from the company that poison all my pleasures—could I go, says a third, and settle in a country, where maxims and laws altogether different from those under which I live—could I but obtain that place, which would take me out of the obscurity, in which I am buried alive, and render me conspicuous—could I acquire a sufficient fortune to support a certain number of domestics, and to procure me certain accommodations, then in retirement and silence I would gratify the desire, that alone animates me, of employing my life in a pursuit of wisdom and virtue and happiness! Poor mortals, will you always run phantoms! No, it is not any of the revolutions you so earnestly desire can alter the vanity essential to human things: with all the advantages which you so earnestly desire, you would find yourself as void, and as discontented as you are now. *The thing, which hath been, is that which shall be; and that, which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.* O that it were as easy to imprint these truths on our hearts, as it is to give evidence that they are truths to the judgment!

II. Let us endeavour to admit these truths with all their effects, (and this shall be the second part of our discourse) let us attempt the work, though we have so many reasons to fear a want of success. Let us first examine the destination of man—next let us look into the school of the world—then into the experience of Solomon—and lastly, let us review the history of our own lives. These are four barriers against

against imaginary projects; four proofs, or rather four sources of demonstrations in evidence of the truth of the text. *The thing, that hath been, is that which shall be; and that, which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

1. Let us first observe the *appointment* of man, and let us not form schemes opposite to that of our Creator. When he placed us in this world, he did not intend to confine us to it: but when he formed us capable of happiness, he intended we should seek it in an œconomy different from this. Without this principle man is an inexplicable enigma; his faculties and his wishes, his afflictions and his conscience, his life and his death, every thing that concerns man is obscure, and beyond all elucidation.

His *faculties* are enigmatical. Tell us, what is the end and design of the faculties of man? Why hath he the faculty of knowing? What, is it only to arrange a few words in his memory? Only to know the sounds or the pictures, to which divers nations of the world have associated their ideas? Is it merely to learn greek and hebrew, to collect a chaos of ancient history, to go beyond remote ages, and to discover with some degree of probability what were the habits, the customs and the follies of the first inhabitants of this universe? Hath man intelligence only for the purpose of racking his brain, and losing himself in a world of abstractions, in order to disentangle a few questions from metaphysical labyrinths, what is the origin of ideas, what are the properties, and what is the nature of spirit? Glorious object of knowledge for an intelligent being! An object in general more likely to produce scepticism than demonstration of a science properly so called. Let us reason in like manner on the other faculties of mankind.

His *desires* are problematical. What power can eradicate, what power can moderate his desire to extend and perpetuate his duration? The human heart includes in its wish the past, the present, the future, yea eternity itself. Explain to us, what proportion there can be between the desires of man and the wealth, which he accumulates, the honours he pursues, the sceptre in his hand, and the crown on his head?

His *miseries* are enigmatical. This article opens a more ample field of meditation than the former, for the pleasures of mankind are only a point, only an atom in comparison of the miseries, which pursue and overtake him. Who can reconcile

reconcile the doctrine of a good God with that of a miserable man, with the doubts that divide his mind, with the remorse that gnaws his heart, with the uncertainties that torment him, with the catastrophes that envelope him, with the vissisitudes which are always altering his situation, with the false friends who betray him, with pain that consumes him, with indigence that contracts him, with neglect and contempt which mortify him, and with such a number of other inconveniences and calamities as conspire to imbitter his existence?

His *life* is a mystery. What part, poor man, what part are you acting in this world? Who misplaced you thus?

His *death* is enigmatical. This is the greatest of all enigmas; four days of life, a life of sixty or an hundred years, is all that this creature called man hath to expect in this world; he disappears almost as soon as he makes his appearance, he is gone in an instant from the cradle to the coffin, his swaddling bands are taken off and his shroud is put on.

Lay down the principle, which we have advanced, grant that the great design of the Creator, by placing man amidst the objects of this present world, was to draw out and extend his desires after another world, and then all these clouds vanish, all these veils are drawn aside, all these enigmas explained, nothing is obscure, nothing is problematical in man.

His *faculties* are not enigmatical; the faculty of knowing is not confined to such vain science as he can acquire in this world. He is not placed here to acquire knowledge, but virtue, at least he is placed in this world to acquire knowledge only so far a scontributes to the acquisition of virtue. If he acquire virtue, he will be admitted into another world, where his utmost desire of knowledge will be gratified.

His *desires* are not mysterious. When the laws of order require him to check and controul his wishes, let him restrain them, When the profession of religion requires it let him deny himself agreeable sensations, and let him patiently suffer the cross, tribulations and persecutions. Let him subdue his passion for elevation and grandeur, and let him humbly rest in that mean situation where it hath pleased providence to place him. Let him moderate his love of riches, and let him patiently submit to poverty and indigence After he shall have thus submitted to the laws of his Creator, he

may

may expect another period, in which his desires to be great will be satisfied.

His *miseries* are no more enigmatical; they exercise his virtue, and will be rewarded with glory:

His *life* ceases to be mysterious. It is a state of probation, a time of trial, a period given him to make choice of an eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery.

His *death* is no longer a mystery, and it is impossible that either his life or his death should be enigmas, for the one unfolds the other. The life of man is not an enigma, because it tends to death, and death verifies, proves and demonstrates the idea we have given of life.

We conclude then, that the destination of man is one great barrier against imaginary schemes of happiness. Change the face of society; subvert the order of the world: put despotical government in the place of a democracy; peace in the place of war, plenty in the place of scarcity, and you will alter nothing but the surface of human things, the substance will always continue the same. *The thing, that hath been, is that which shall be; and that, which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

2. The *school of the world* opens to us a second source of demonstrations. Enter this school, and you will renounce all vain schemes of felicity.

There you will learn that the greatest part of the pleasures of the world, of which you entertain such fine notions, are only phantoms, which seem indeed at a distance to have some solidity and consistence, but which vanish the moment you approach and try to enjoy them.

There you will learn that the extensive views, the great designs, the plans of immortality and glory, which revolve in the mind of an ambitious man, keep him continually upon the rack, trouble his repose, deprive him of sleep, and render him insensible to all the pleasures of life.

There you will understand that the friends, who attach themselves to us when we have favours to bestow, are venal souls, who put up their esteem to auction, and sell it to the highest bidder; blood suckers who live upon the substance of those, round whom they twist and twine; that the sacred names of friendship, tenderness, zeal, and devotedness, are nothing in their mouths but empty sounds, to which they affix no ideas.

There

There you will find that those passions, which men of high rank have the power of fully gratifying, are sources of trouble and remorse, and that all the pleasures of gratification is nothing in comparison of the pain of one regret caused by the remembrance of it.

There you will learn that the husband man, who all day follows the plough or the cart, and who finds at home in the evening a family of love, where innocent and affectionate children surround a table furnished with plain and simple diet, is incomparably more happy than the favourite of victory and fortune, who rides in a superb carriage attended by a splendid retinue, who sits at a table, where art and nature seem to vie with each other in lavishing out their treasures, who is surrounded with courtiers watching their fate in the cast of his eye, or the signal of his hand.

In a word, you will there understand, that what may seem the most fortunate events in your favour will contribute very little to your happiness.

3. But if the school of the world is capable of teaching us to renounce our fanciful projects of felicity, Solomon is the man in the world the most learned in this school, and the most able to give us intelligence. Accordingly we have made *his declaration* the third source of our demonstrations.

When your preachers declaim against the vanity of human things, you secretly say to yourselves, their judgment merits very little regard. You think that they, generally educated in silence and retirement, having breathed only the dusty air of schools and libraries, are unacquainted with that world against which they declaim. I will not now examine this reproach. People of our order, I grant, are very apt to form false ideas of the world. But take our word for one truth, for which we could allege a thousand proofs, that is, that if they magnify worldly objects, it is because they are strangers to the world. A hermit, who hath spent all his days in dens and deserts; a nun sequestered from society in her childhood, and buried in the cells and solitary walks of a convent; a man, who hath grown gray over his books; people of this kind generally imagine that the world is full of pleasure, and that the demon of voluptuousness hath strewed all the paths with flowers and perfumes in favour of such as travel them. I know no one more proper to teach us a good course of morality than an old reformed courtier, who

chooses to retire after he hath spent the prime of his life in dissipation.

On this principle, what an impression ought the declaration of Solomon to make on our minds? But what an idea doth he give us of all the good things, of which he had made an experiment? *And this also*, saith he of each particular, in the catalogue of the whole, *and this also is vanity.* This word seems to me very remarkable, THIS *also, and this also is vanity.*

Few men are so fascinated with the world as not to know that some things in it are vain and vexatious. Most men say of some particular object *this is vanity:* but very few are so rational as to comprehend all the good things of this life in the same class, and to say of each, as Solomon did, *this also is vanity.* A poor peasant, whose ruinous cottage doth not keep out the weather, will readily say, my cottage is vanity: But he imagines, there is a great deal of solidity in the happiness of him, who sleeps in a superb palace. A man, who is admitted only into a small circle of company hardly known in society, will say without hesitation, my circle is vanity: but he fancies there is a great deal of solidity in the happiness of those, who are admitted into circles, or shall I rather say, into that chaos, where jews and greeks, barbarians and scythians, people of all nations, and of every religion seem to contribute to a general disorder and confusion?

Solomon knew all these conditions of life, and it was because he knew them all that he declaimed against them: and had you like him known them all by experience, you would form such an idea as he did of the whole. See what a list he makes, and observe, he says that of each, which he said of the whole, *this also is vanity.* What! Is it vain to possess great riches? Yes, *He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; this is also vanity* What! Is it in vain to become a celebrated author, a model of erudition? Yes, saith he, of making many books *there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. This also is vanity. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity*

4. To reflections on the experience of Solomon add your own, and to this purpose recollect the *history of your life.* Remember the time when sighing and wishing for the condition, in which providence hath since placed you, you considered

sidered it as the centre of felicity, and verily thought could you obtain that state you should wish for nothing more. You have obtained it. Do you think now as you did then?

You, who formerly had hardly enough to subsist on, now possess enough for your subsistence, and almost enough for your wishes, have you less inclination now to augment your superfluities, than you had then to acquire a maintenance?

You, who have been raised from the meanest and most obscure employment in society to one of the most conspicuous and brilliant offices, do you feel yourself less disposed to have no equal, than you did formerly to have fewer masters?

You, who are now come to manhood through a sickly youth, in which you did not expect to live half your days, have you less desire to arrive at a hoary old age, than you had formerly to advance to manhood?

Realize all the fanciful schemes of happiness, that revolve in your minds, and you will find that the good things you acquire will leave you as hungry, and as void as these do which you now actually possess: and that the more you enter into the spirit of this supposition the more will you be astonished at the exact conformities there are between conditions, which at first sight appear to you so extremely different.

M. From all these reflections what consequences shall we draw? That all conditions are absolutely equal? That as they, who actually enjoy the most desirable advantages of life, ought to consider them with sovereign contempt, so people, who are deprived of them, ought not to take any pains to acquire them, and to better their condition? No, my brethren, God forbid we should preach a morality so austere, and so likely to disgrace religion.

On the one hand, they, to whom God hath granted the good things of this life, ought to know the value of them, and to observe with gratitude the difference, which providence hath made between them and others. Worldly prosperity, I grant, is not the most substantial good, however it is not an imaginary advantage: it is not indeed that permanent good, which will continue ours after death, but it is, however, capable of rendering the present state more agreeable.

Do you enjoy liberty? Liberty is a great good: feel the pleasure of liberty. Behold the man, who is inclosed in lofty and impenetrable walls, who breathes only an infectious and unwholesome air, who lies on straw in a dungeon, and who with the utmost attention and pains can hardly perceive a ray of light, and bless God that you are not in the condition of that man.

Are you rich? Wealth is a great good: enjoy the pleasure of being rich. Behold the man loaded with debts, destitute of friends, pursued by inexorable creditors, having indeed just enough to keep himself alive to day, but not knowing how he shall support life to-morrow, and bless God you are not in the condition of that man.

Do you enjoy your health? Health is a great good: relish the pleasure of being well. Observe the man lying on a sick bed, unable to bear up a body loaded with infirmities, not able to move himself, without excruciating sensations of pain, crawling toward the grave by the horrible road of the gout or the stone.

Nothing but a fund of stupidity or ingratitude can render us insensible to temporal blessings, when it pleases God to bestow them on us. What! Did you as soon as you opened your eyes see yourself crowned with a thousand advantages; did God seem to take pleasure in making your condition a composition of honour, wealth and pleasure; did you find yourself, without contributing to it the least labour or attention, abundantly supplied with every thing that can render life easy and delicious; and because, carry human felicity to what pitch you will, there is nothing perfect in it, do you give up yourself to grief and melancholy, does a dark and gloomy temper within you triumph over all the motives, that ought to inspire you with gratitude and joy!

As they, to whom providence hath granted the comforts of life, ought to know the value of them, and to enjoy them with gratitude, so it is allowable, yea it is the duty of such as are deprived of them to endeavour to acquire them, to meliorate their condition, and to procure in future a condition more happy than that, to which they have hitherto been condemned, and which hath caused them so many difficulties and tears. Self-love is the most natural and lawful of all our passions. We ought not to neglect to acquire any good, except the possession of it would be incompatible with

with that of a greater good, and we ought not to consent to suffer any ills, except enduring them would prevent greater ills. But, other things being equal, every one ought to endeavour to procure himself an agreeable condition of life in this world.

Beside, the love of our neighbour, the duty so much enforced by our great lawgiver, the love which our master requires us to extend as far to our neighbour as ourselves, this duty engageth us to avail ourselves of all the innocent means, which are offered to us to acquire the good things of this life. The more riches you have the more able will you be to assist the indigent. The higher you are elevated in society, the more will you have it in your power to succour the oppressed. The more learning, and knowledge, and accuracy you have, the more will it be in your power to press home the duties of religion, to defend the truth, and to display the beauty and advantage of virtue.

Our design, in restraining your projects, is to engage you patiently to bear the inconveniences of your present condition, when you cannot remedy them: because whatever difference there may seem to be between the most happy and the most miserable mortal in this world, there is much less, all things considered, than our misguided passions imagine.

Our design, in checking the immoderate inclination we have to contrive fanciful schemes of happiness, is to make you enjoy with tranquillity such blessings as you have. Most men render themselves insensible to their present advantages by an extravagant passion for future acquisitions. The avidity, with which they wish to acquire more riches, prevents their enjoying what they actually possess; the avidity, with which they desire to obtain a station more elevated in society, prevents their tasting the pleasure of that, in which providence hath placed them. In a word, our design is to engage you to proportion the pains you take to obtain worldly advantages to the true value of them.

Above all, the design, the chief design we have in denouncing a vain and unsatisfastory being in this world, is to engage you to seek after a happy futurity in the presence of God; to engage you to expect from the blessings of a future state what you cannot promise yourself in this. And what, my soul, canst thou expect during the short period of this life, if the remainder will resemble the past, if in future years thy condition will resemble that of the former days, if thou must pass through the same vicissitudes, suffer the same

same maladies, be witness to the same injustice, see the same infidelity and the same perfidy?

But if all mankind ought to preserve themselves from the disorder of fanciful schemes of future pleasure, they above all are abound to do so, who are arrived at old age, when years accumulated bring us near the infirmities of declining life, or a dying bed. Such a man ought to say to himself, what can I henceforth expect in this world? Should an unheard of revolution happen in my favour, should the face of the universe be changed, should all the advantages of the world unite, and present themselves to me, what benefit could I derive from them?

What advantage could I derive from a well furnished table, I whose palate hath lost the faculty of tasting and relishing food? What advantage could I derive from a numerous levee, I, to whom company is become a burden, and who am in a manner a burden to myself? What advantage could I derive from elegant apartments, and extensive landscapes, I whose eyes are incapable of discerning objects, whose body almost motionless is confined to an easy chair, or sick bed? In one word, what benefit can I reap from a concurrence of all the advantages of life, I, who am within a few steps of the gates of death? Happy! When my life comes to an end, to be able to incorporate my existence with that of the immortal God! Happy! When I feel this earthly tabernacle sink, to be able to exercise that *faith*, which is an *evidence of things not seen!* Happy to ascend to that *city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!* Heb. xi. 1. 10.

May we all, my dear brethren, live, grow old, and die in these sentiments! God grant us the grace. To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII*.

DISGUST WITH LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES ii. 17.

I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.

WERE we to estimate life by the idea, which Solomon gives of it in the words of the text, it should seem, there was very little wisdom in our congratulating one another this morning on beginning a new year. There should seem better reasons for deploring our fate because we are alive, than for congratulating one another on the happiness of seeing another new years day. Ye desolate families, in which death hath made such cruel breaches! Methinks, while this day naturally brings to your remembrance those dear parts of yourselves, you ought rather to shed tears of joy than sorrow! And you, *Rachel, weeping for* your *children*, you ought rather, to *be comforted for* the *children* that are, than for those that *are not.* It should seem, that the benedictions of the servant of God, who preceded us this morning in this pulpit, and to which we are going to join ours, were very unsuitable to the tender affection we owe you, and to which this solemnity adds a new degree of activity and force.

Long may you live, said we this morning to one another, may God bless you, your fellow citizens, your relations, your friends, and your children, long may they live! Enjoy the blessings of peace, prosperity in commerce, stability in freedom, riches and plenty in abundance! Attain, and, if it be possible, go beyond the usual limits of the life of man, and may every day of that life be distinguished by some new prosperity.

* Preached on the first day of the year 1728.

prosperity. These were the benedictions and prayers, which our friends uttered to us and we to them. And yet the wise man tells us that riches and plenty, that the best established liberty and the most prosperous trade, that the blessings of peace and all the advantages of this life are nothing but vanity. He doth more, after he had experienced all the pomp of worldly grandeur, an immensity of wealth, the utmost refinement of pleasure, and the most extensive reputation, after he had been the happiest mortal, that ever lived upon earth, he tells us in the words of the text, *I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.*

What then, must we revoke the congratulations of this morning? Do we come to pray God to send out his destroying angels, to return us that mortality, which hath been ravaging our towns and provinces? Are we come to collect all our prayers into this one of Jonah, *O Lord take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live,* chap. iv. 3. or in this of Elijah, *It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers,* 1 Kings xix. 4.

It is this contrast of ideas that we will endeavour to reconcile, for in this point of light we are going to consider the words of the text, and to treat of disgust with the world and contempt of life. Happy! If we be able by any observations of ours to abate the asperity of your minds in regard to the hateful things of life, and to engage you to make a holy use of every thing agreeable in it. Happy! if, by turning your attention to the amiable side of life, we may inspire you with gratitude to God for preserving it, in spite of the many perils to which it is exposed; and if, by shewing you the other side, we may incline you to quit it with joy, whenever it shall please God to require it. This is the substance of all our acclamations and prayers in your favour to-day. Almighty and most merciful God, condescend to ratify in heaven what we are sincerely endeavouring to effect on earth! Amen.

I suppose, it is Solomon himself, who speaks the words of the text, and not any one of the interlocutors, whom he introduces in his book. I suppose he expresses in the words his own sentiments, and not those of any other person; and that he tells us not what he thought while his reason was wandering, and he was pursuing the vanities of the world, but

but what he thought after his recovery, and when he was under the direction of divine wisdom.

This observation is absolutely necessary for the understanding of the text. The great difficulty of the book of Ecclesiastes, is owing to the great variety of persons, who are introduced there, each of whom proposes maxims conformable to his own principles. Is it the same man, who says in one place, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Live joyfully all the days of thy vanity, for that is thy portion in this life, and God now accepteth thy works*, chap. ix. 7. 9. And in another place, *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment?* chap. xi. 9. Is it the same man, who saith in one place, *I commend mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry*, chap. viii. 15. and in another place, *I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it?* chap. ii. 2. Is it the same man, who saith in one place, *The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*, chap. xii. 7. and in another place, *The dead have no more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten: to him that is joined to all the living there is hope, but the dead know not any thing, for a living dog is better than a dead lion?* chap. ix. 4, &c.

Expositors of this book, perhaps, have not always paid a sufficient attention to this variety. Which of us hath not, for example, quoted against the doctrine of invocation of saints these words, *The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing; their love, and their hatred is now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun?* chap. ix. 5, 6. Yet I think we have sufficient reasons to presume, that the wise man puts these words into the mouth of a libertine, so that though they contain a truth, yet they cannot be proposed in proof of a doctrine. I suppose we must entertain the same idea of another passage, which seems to establish one of the finest maxims of morality, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest*, chap. ix. 10. But if you consider, that this is a consequence drawn from the irony just before, *Go, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine*

with a merry heart, ver. 7. you will suppose, as we do, that it contains a pernicious maxim, like that mentioned by the prophet, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die*, Isa. xxii. 13.

There are other inspired books, as well as this of Ecclesiastes, subject to the same misinterpretation. Under pretence that the scripture is divinely inspired, people quote texts indiscriminately. Certainly it is divinely inspired, and for this reason we should always reject such maxims as would tend to defeat the design of it. Without this precaution you may prove by scripture things the most opposite to the design of scripture; you may prove that God hath violated his promises, because it is said in scripture, *where is the promise of his coming!* Or you may prove that atheism is preferable to religion, because the scripture saith, *there is no God;* and so by a hundred other passages you may prove a hundred similar absurdities.

But the connection of our text with preceding and following verses, and its perfect harmony with the design of the wise man, which was to decry the world and its pleasures, and by his own experience to undeceive such as made idols of them, confirm, in my opinion, the judgment we have formed of them; the whole authorizes us to consider the words as proceeding from the mouth of Solomon himself, expressive of his own sentiments and not those of others, and what he thought after his reconversion, and not what his opinion was during his dissipation.

I. On this principle, we will first rid the text of several *false meanings*, which it may seem at first sight to countenance; for as there is a disgust with the world, and a contempt of life, which wisdom inspires, so there is a hatred of the world, that ariseth from evil dispositions. We may be disgusted with life from a principle of melancholy—from a principle of misanthropy—from a principle of discontent—and, which is still more singular, we may be disgusted with the world through an excessive esteem for the world, and hate life through a too violent attachment to it.

1. We may hate life because we are *melancholy*. Only he, whose ideas are disconcerted by a dark and gloomy temper, can say fully and without qualification, *I hate life*. To attribute such a disposition to the wise man is to insult the holy Spirit who animated him. All the advantages of life, I grant, cannot procure us perfect happiness, yet every one may

may procure us some satisfaction, transient but real, provided we enjoy each with such moderation as wisdom prescribes. Instead of exclaiming in melancholy mood against society, *What friends! What friendships!* Enjoy the innocent pleasures of society, and you will find that they can contribute to suspend your pain, to dissipate your anxieties, and to relieve your wearisome attention to your misfortunes. Instead of exclaiming against fortune, and saying, *riches and honours, what are they good for?* Enjoy, as far as justice and benevolence will allow, the advantages of fortune, and you will experience that they may procure you some agreeable accommodations, which you are permitted, yea commanded to relish. Instead of exclaiming against reputation, and saying, *what doth it signify to be known, and esteemed among mankind?* Enjoy the advantages of reputation, and you will experience some satisfaction in being respected by intelligent persons in society. Though, in general, the world is unjust in estimating ability and virtue, yet there are many rational members of society, who know how to distinguish gold from tinsel, and real ability from parade.

2. Some are disgusted with life from a principle of *misanthropy*. What is a misanthrope, or a hater of mankind? He is a man, who avoids society only to free himself from the trouble of being useful to it. He is a man, who considers his neighbours only on the side of their defects, not knowing the art of combining their virtues with their vices, and of rendering the imperfections of other people tolerable by reflecting on his own. He is a man more employed in finding out and inflicting punishments on the guilty than in devising means to reform them. He is a man, who talks of nothing but banishing and executing, and who, because he thinks his talents are not sufficiently valued and employed by his fellow citizens, or rather because they know his foible, and do not choose to be subject to his caprice, talks of quitting cities, towns and societies, and of living in dens or in deserts. Intercourse with mankind is disagreeable, you say. Very well, I grant it. But do you know what would make it infinitely more disagreeable? I will tell you. It would be, if all the members of society were animated with your spirit. What a society would that be, which should be composed of people without charity, without patience, without condescension?

My text doth not inculcate such sentiments as these. The wise man had met with a great many disagreeable events in society which had given him a great deal of pain, but, far from being driven out of it, he continued to reside in the world, and to amend and improve it by his wise counsel and good example. Read the book of Proverbs, and this of Ecclesiastes, and observe how he endeavours to preserve society from damage by exposing the snares, into which he himself had fallen. Behold, being *converted* himself, he endeavours to *strengthen his brethren*, and to *teach transgressors the ways of God!* How accurately doth he describe all conditions of life! With what charity doth he condescend, if I may venture to speak so, from the *cedars of Lebanon* to the *hyssop upon the wall*, so that there is no profession so mean, nor any man so obscure in his profession, that he doth not not either direct or improve. Disgust with the world should never prevent our assisting the inhabitants of it, and our contempt of life should always be accompanied with charity for the living.

3. Sometimes a spirit of *discontent* produces disgust with the world, and contempt of life. To hear the people I mean, one would think it was impossible that this world should be governed by a wise being, because, forsooth, they are doomed with the rest of mankind to live in a valley of trouble. But who art thou, thou miserable man, to conceive ideas so false, and to form opinions so rash! Learn to know thyself, and to do thyself justice! If thou shouldst be required by the rigorous judgment of God to expiate thy crimes, it would not be in the vanity of this world, it would be in the flames of hell! It would not be in the society of men, faithless in trade, inconstant in friendship, insipid in conversation, troublesome in applications, perfidious in contracts, it would be in the society of the devil and his angels! It would not be in the narrow compass of this life, the brevity of which may be justly compared to a vapour lost in the air, a flower fading in the sun, a dream vanishing in the morning, it would be in a succession of ages, in the boundless gulfs of eternity.

4. I said finally, my brethren, that we were sometimes disgusted with the world through an *excess of fondness* for the world, and hated life through an over valuation of it. *O heart of man, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!* Jer. xvii. 9. Who would not think, to hear some men exclaim, *Ah human life, I only wish to free myself from*

from thy connections, and thou, wicked world, I detest thee! Who would not think that these people were convinced of the vanity of the world! But undeceive yourselves. Man enters the world as an enchanted place. While the charm lasts, the man I speak of is in raptures, and thinks he hath found the supreme good. He imagines that riches have no wings, that splendid fortune hath no reverse, that the great have no caprice, that friends have no levity, that health and youth are eternal: but as it is not long before he recovers his senses, he becomes disgusted with the world in the same proportion as he had been infatuated with it, and his hatred of life is exactly as extravagant as his love of it had been: that is to say, these sentiments, which seem so just and respectable, do not proceed from serious reflections on the views, which an immortal soul ought to have: that is to say, you would have consented to renounce all hopes of future happiness, and to be for ever separated from God, had not the spring of your life passed away with so much rapidity, had your connections been more durable, had your interest at court been better supported.

How pitiable is your condition! In it you unite the misfortunes of time with the miseries of eternity. You disclaim both heaven and earth, you are disgusted with the vanity of one, and you have no taste for the other. A worldling indemnifies himself by present enjoyments for the loss of future bliss, of which he hath no prospect; and a christian indemnifies himself by enjoying pleasures in prospect for the loss of sensual delights: but you! At what do you aspire? Your condition is the heighth of misery, as it is the heighth of absurdity.

It is not in any of these senses that the wise man saith, *I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.* He would have us understand, that the earth hath more thorns than flowers—that our condition here, though incomparably better than we deserve, is however inadequate to our just and constitutional desires—that our inconveniences in this life would seem intolerable, unless we were wise enough to direct them to the same end, that God proposed by exposing us to suffer them—in a word, that nothing but hope in a future state formed on another plan can render the disorders of this world tolerable. So much may serve to *explain* the meaning of the wise man.

II. Let us now proceed to *justify* the sense given, and to this I shall devote the remainder of this discourse, and all the

the moments of attention, which we shall take the liberty yet to require of you.

I will make use of no artifice to obtain my end. I will not affect, in order to detach you from the world, to exhibit only the odious things of the world; nor will I combat an excessive love of life by opposing against it the pains and the miseries of the living: but I mean to attack your idols in their fort, decry life by shewing its most amiable sides, and to endeavour to disgust you with the world by exposing the most desirable objects in it.

The phantoms, that seduced Solomon during his dissipation, may be reduced to two classes. The first suppose in the dissipated man very little knowledge, and very little taste; and it is astonishing that a man so eminently endowed with knowledge could set his heart upon them. The second may more easily impose on an enlightened and generous mind. In the first class I place riches, grandeur and voluptuousness, with all their appendages. If these be, as they certainly are, the most common idols of mankind, it is for a reason inglorious to them, it is because most men have very little knowledge, and very little taste.

The world hath phantoms more specious, life hath charms more capable of seducing a generous heart, and of imposing on a liberal mind. I put these into three classes. In the first I put the advantages of science—in the second the pleasures of friendship—in the third the privileges, I mean the temporal privileges, of virtue and heroism. I will endeavour to unmask these three figures, and to prove that the very dispositions, which should contribute most to the pleasure of life, mental abilities, tenderness of heart, rectitude and delicacy of conscience are actually dispositions, which contribute most of all to imbitter life.

1. If ever *possessions* could make man happy, Solomon must certainly have been the happiest of mankind. Imagine the most proper and the most effectual means of acquiring knowledge, joined to an avidity to obtain it, both were united in the person of this prince. We, individuals, when we have received from heaven abilities for science, we generally want assistance to cultivate them. What individual is able to send emissaries into distant climates to make observations to perfect geography, physic, astronomy, botany, navigation? An individual, to make collections, to ascertain reports, to procure materials, must carry on works, which in a word, more properly belong to the beasts of burden of the learned world

world than to himself, whose time should be better employed in exercising, and improving his own natural abilities. An individual seldom hath it in his power to gain access to the museums of great men, and to procure the productions of their pens, or to consult the oracles that proceed from their mouths. An individual is often condemned to turn the studies that naturally employ his liberal mind into a mercenary trade the only means of providing bread for himself and his family. In some protestant states youth are but half educated for want of endowments, and people choose rather to pluck the unripe fruits of the finest genius than to furnish him with the means of bringing them to perfection. A king, a rich king like Solomon, is free from all these difficulties. He hath all the assistance necessary to the cultivation of his mind, and to the full gratification of his avidity for science. He saith, what perhaps you have not sufficiently observed, *I turned myself to behold wisdom*, that is, I applied myself to the sciences, and *what can the man do that cometh after the king?* chap. ii. 12. That is who will ever have such innumerable means of acquiring and perfecting knowledge as those, with which royal advantages furnish me?

Accordingly the world was filled with the science of this prince, and his science hath given occasion to a great many fabulous histories. To him hath been attributed a book entitled the *contradiction of Solomon*, condemned by Pope Gelasius, and other works named *enchantments*, *clavicula*, *necromancy*, *ideas*, *ncomænia*, *letters to king Hiram*. Some ancient fathers thought, that the pagan philosophers had read his writings, and that Aristotle in particular had taken his *history of animals* from the works of this prince. Josephus says, that he composed a *book of charms* to heal the incurable, and that one Eleazar, a jew, had found in it a secret, by which he freed a person from possession, a reverie mentioned by Origen. The schoolmen have agitated a great many indiscreet questions concerning the science of Solomon, and have inquired, whether he were more learned than the angels and the virgin Mary; and they have persuaded themselves not only that he was a great poet, a great physician, and a great astronomer, but also that he understood all the mysteries of the theology of the schools, and was well acquainted with the doctrine of transubstantiation.

We have better evidence of the science of Solomon than these visionaries. The scripture itself informs us, that God *gave him a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was*

was none like him before, neither after him should any arise unto him, 1 Kings iii. 12. that he was *wiser*, that is a greater philosopher, *than all the children of the east country, and all the Egyptians,* chap. iv. 30. 31. By the *children of the east* we understand the Arabian philosophers, Chaldeans and the Persians so famous for their erudition, and particularly for their profound knowledge of astronomy. He was wiser than all the *Egyptians*, that is, the most consummate doctors of Egypt, a country famous in the time of Moses for its literature, called by the pagans the mother of arts, and who boasted that they first of all men knew how to take dimensions of the stars, and to calculate their motions, as Macrobius, Diodorus of Sicily, and many other authors affirm. The scripture saith that Solomon was *wiser than Etham, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda;* names which the Jews understand in a mystical sense, meaning by Ethan Abraham, by Heman Moses, and by Chalcol Joseph. The scripture saith further, that he composed *three thousand proverbs, and a thousand and five songs: that he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop, that springeth out of the wall, also of beasts, and of fowl, and of every creeping things, and of fishes,* ver. 32, 33. Some of these works are a part of the canon of scripture, but the rest are lost.

Now what saith this great man concerning science? He acknowledgeth indeed that it was preferrable to ignorance, *the wise man's eyes,* saith he, *are in his head,* that is a man of education is in possession of some prudential maxims to regulate his life, whereas an illiterate man *walketh in darkness;* but yet saith he, *it happeneth even to me, as it happeneth to the fool, and why was I then wise?* ver. 15. And again, *the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing; for in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,* chap. i. 8. 18. So again, in another place, after he had proposed some rules for the government of life, he adds, *My son be admonished by these, for of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh,* chap. xii. 12. I wish I could weigh every expression. Observe however two imperfections of science.

1. Observe first the *little progress* made in science by those, who pursue it to the highest pitch. As they advance in this immense field they discover, shall I say new extents,

or

or new abysses, which they can never fathom. The more they nourish themselves with this rich pasture, the more keen do their appetites become. *The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, and of making many books there is no end.*

2. Remark next the *little justice* done in the world to such as excel most in science. *He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow, and it happeneth even to me as it happeneth to a fool.* Yes! after you have spent all your youth, after you have impaired your health, after you have spent your fortune to improve your own mind, and to enable you to improve those of other men, *it will happen even to you as it happeneth to a fool.* You will be told, that sciences have nothing in them that deserve the attention of a man of quality. A man of mean extraction, who carries himself like a lord, will tell you that a man of birth ought to aspire at something more noble than meditating on questions of law, studying cases of conscience, and explaining holy scripture. You will be told, that there is not half the knowledge required to sparkle in political bodies, and to decide on a bench the lives, and fortunes, and honours of mankind. Presumptuous youths will judge, and without appeal condemn your discourses and your publications, and will pronounce with decisive tone, *this is not solid, that is superficial!* The superiority of your understanding will raise up against you a world of ignorant people, who will say, that you corrupt the youth, because you would guard them against prejudice; that you stab orthodoxy, because you endeavour to heal the wounds, which pedantry and intolerance have given it; that you trouble society, because you endeavour to purify morality, and to engage the great as well as the small, magistrates as well as people to submit to its holy laws. They will prefer before you both in the state and in the church novices, who are hardly fit to be your disciples.

Blessed idiots! You, who, surrounded with a circle of idiots like yourselves, having first stupified yourselves with your own vanity, are now intoxicated with the incense offered by your admirers: you, who, having collected a few bombastic phrases, are spreading the sails of your eloquence, and are bound for the ocean of glory: you, whose sublime nonsense, stale common-places, and pedantic systems have acquired you such a reputation for learning and erudition as is due only to real merit: your condition seems to me often

preferable to that of first rate geniusses, and most accomplished scholars! Ah! *Wisdom is vanity and vexation of spirit—of making many books there is no end—It happeneth even to me as it happeneth to the fool—There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool, for all shall be forgotten—therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.*

2. The second disposition, which seems as if it would contribute much to the pleasure of life but which often imbitters it, is *tenderness of heart.* Let the sacred names of friendship and tenderness never come out of some mouths; let them never be used by profane people to express certain connections, which far from having the reality have not even the appearance of rational sensibility! Would you give these names to such vague unions as are formed only because you are a burden to yourselves; to connections in which the sentiments of the heart have no share, in which nothing is intended except the mutual performance of some capricious customs or the assuaging of some criminal passions, to the impetuosity of which you like brute beasts are given up? Would you give these names to those unpleasant interviews, in which while you visit you inwardly groan under the necessity of visiting, in which the mouth protests what the heart denies, in which, while you outwardly profess to be affected with the misfortunes of another, you consider them inwardly with indifference and insensibility, and while you congratulate them on the prosperity, which providence bestows on them, you envy their condition, and sometimes regard it with a malice, and a madness, which you cannot help discovering?

By friendship, and tenderness, I mean those affectionate attachments produced by a secret sympathy, which virtue cements, which piety sanctifies, which a mutual vigilance over each others interests confirms with indissoluble, I had almost said eternal bonds. I call a friend an inestimable treasure which might for a while render our abode on earth as happy as that in heaven, did not that wise providence, that formed us for heaven and not for earth, refuse us the possession of it.

It is clear by the writings of Solomon, and more so by the history of his life, that his heart was very accessible to this kind of pleasure. How often doth he write encomiums on faithful friends! *A friend,* saith he, *loveth at all times, he is a brother born for adversity. A friend sticketh closer than*

than a brother, Prov. xvii. 17. and xviii. 24. But where is this friend, who sticketh closer than a brother? Where is this friend, who loveth at all times? One would think the wise man drew the portrait only to save us the useless labour of inquiring after the original. Perhaps you are incapable of tasting the bitterness of friendship only because you are incapable of relishing the sweetness of it.

What friends do we make upon earth? At first lively, eager, full of ardour: presently dull, and disgusted through the ease with which they had been gratified. At first soft, gentle, all condescension and compliance: presently masters, imperious tyrants, rigorously exacting as a debt an assiduity which can arise only from inclination, pretending to domineer over our reason, after they have vitiated our taste. At first attentive and teachable, while prejudices conceal their imperfections from us, ready to acquiesce in any thing while our sentiments are conformable to their inclinations: but presently intractable and forward, not knowing how to yield, though we gently point out their frailty, and endeavour to assist them to correct it. At first assidious, faithful, generous, while fortune smiles on us: but presently, if she betray us, a thousand times more faithless, ungrateful, and perfidious than she. What an airy phantom is human friendship!

I wish, however, through the favour of heaven, that what is only an airy nothing to other men may be a reality in regard to you, and I will take it for granted, that you have found what so many others have sought in vain. Alas! I must, yes, here I must deplore your destiny. Multiplied, so to speak, in the person of that other self, you are going to multiply your troubles. You are going to feel in that other self ills, which hitherto you have felt only in yourself. You will be disgraced in his disgraces, sick in his sicknesses. If for a few years you enjoy one another, as if each were a whole world, presently, presently death will cut the bond, presently death will dissolve the tender ties, and separate your intwined hearts. Then you will find yourself in an universal solitude. You will think the whole world is dead. The universe, the whole universe will seem to you a desert uninhabited, and uninhabitable. Ah! You, who, experience this, shall I call you to attest these sorrowful truths? Shall I open again wounds which time hath hardly closed? Shall I call those tremulous adieus, those cruel separations, which cost you so many regrets and tears? Shall I expose to

view bones, and infection, and putrefaction, the only remains of him, who was your support in trouble, your counsel in difficulty, your consolation in adversity?

Ah, charms of friendship, delicious errors, lovely chimeras, you are infinitely more capable of deceiving than of satisfying us, of poisoning life than of sweetening it, and of making us break with the world than of attaching us to it! My soul, wouldst thou form unalterable connections? Set thy love upon thy treasure, esteem God, obey his holy voice, which from the highest heavens saith to thee, *Give me thine heart!* In God thou wilt find a love fixed and faithful, a love beyond the reach of temporal revolutions, which will follow thee, and fill thee with felicity for ever and ever.

3. In fine, I will venture to affirm, that if any thing seem capable to render life agreeable, and if any thing in general render it disagreeable, it is *rectitude*, and *delicacy of conscience*. I know Solomon seems here to contradict himself, and the author of the book of Proverbs seems to refute the author of the book of Ecclesiastes. The author of the book of Ecclesiastes informs us that virtue is generally useless, and sometimes hurtful in this world: but according to the author of the book of Proverbs virtue is most useful in this world. Hear the author of Ecclesiastes. *All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his in his wickedness. All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath*, chap. vii. 15. ix. 2. Hear the author of the book of Proverbs. *My son forget not my law: but let thy heart keep my commandments; for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her*, chap. iii. 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15.

How shall we reconcile these things? To say, as some do, that the author of Proverbs speaks of the spiritual rewards

of

of virtue, and the author of Ecclesiastes of the temporal state of it, is to cut the knot instead of untying it. Of many solutions, which we have no time now to examine, there is one that bids fair to remove the difficulty; that is, that when the author of the book of Proverbs makes temporal advantages the rewards of virtue, he speaks of some rare periods of society, whereas the author of the book of Ecclesiastes describes the common general state of things. Perhaps the former refers to the happy time, in which the example of the piety of David being yet recent, and the prosperity of his successors not having then infected either the heart of the king or the morals of his subjects, reputation, riches and honours were bestowed on good men: but the second, probably, speaks of what came to pass soon after. In the first period life was amiable, and living in the world delicious: but of the second the wise man saith, *I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.*

To which of the two periods doth the age in which we live belong? Judge by the description given by the *preacher*, as he calls himself.

Then mankind were ungrateful, the public did not remember the benefits conferred on them by individuals, and their services were unrewarded. *There was a little city besieged by a great king, who built great bulwarks against it, and there was found in it a poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man*, chap. ix. 14, 15.

Then courtiers mean and ungrateful, basely forsook their old master, and paid their court to the heir apparent. *I saw all the living under the sun walking after the child, who shall stand up next instead of the king**, chap. iv. 15.

Then the strong oppressed the weak. *I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforters, and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter.*

Then

* The sense given to this passage by our author is agreeable both to the French version, and to the original. *J'ai oui tous les vivans qui marchent sous le soleel apres l'enfant, qui est la seconde personne qui doit etre en la place du roi.* Per *puerum secundum* intellige, regis filium et hæredem, quod a rege secundus est, ac post eum regnaturus. Poli. Synops. in loc.

Then the courts of justice were corrupt. *I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there* . . . . . chap. iii. 16. We will not finish this disagreeable picture. *I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me.*

Such is the idea the wise man gives us of the world. Yet these vain and precarious objects, this world so proper to inspire a rational mind with disgust, this life so proper to excite hatred in such as know what is worthy of esteem, this is that which hath always fascinated, and which yet continues to fascinate the bulk of mankind.

This it was, that infatuated the inhabitants of the old world, who, even after God had pronounced this dreadful decree, *My spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh, and after an hundred and twenty years he shall be no more**, forgot themselves in the pursuit of present pleasure, *They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that the flood came, and took them all away*, Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.

This was what bewitched the whole heathen world, who lived *without hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12.

This was what enchanted that highly favoured nation, which God distinguished from the rest of the world, and to which he gave his laws, and intrusted his prophecies, yet they *forsook the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*, Jer. ii. 13.

This was what influenced christians, more inexcusable in this respect than jews and pagans, because their religion breathes nothing but disgust with the world, and alienation from the idols of life: and yet they are as much in love with worldly splendor, as eager in pursuit of wealth, as much intoxicated with diversions, gaming, amusements and dissipations as ever jews and pagans could possibly be.

This was the charm that operated on your ancestors, on those who governed the state before you, magistrates: on those who ascended this pulpit before you, ministers: on those who attended the worship of God in this place before you,

* Gen. vi. 3. The sense given by Mr. Saurin is that of many commentators, and seems preferable to our English text, which is obscure. Accipiunt de spatio pœnitentiæ isti ætati concesso, &c.

you, christian people: all these, except a few, followed the multitude, *ran*, with the world *to the same excess of riot*, and made the world their god, just as we all, except a few, yet make the world our god, yet follow the multitude, yet *run*, with the wicked *to the same excess of riot*.

God, in order to undeceive mankind, and to dissolve the charms that fascinated their eyes, often shewed them the world in its true light. He often added extraordinary ills to the ordinary calamities of life; he made *winds his angels*, and *flaming fires his ministers*, Psal. civ. 4. he sent war, mortality, flaming eruptions, pestilence and earthquakes; in one word, he often visited them, as he yet visits us, and with the same design. To them he said, as he yet saith to us, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*, 1 John ii. 15. Eccles. i. 2. and xiii. 13. All this was useless, just as it is now. Then mankind made a god of the world, and so they continue to do.

My brethren, taste is not subject to argument, and if life seems to you supremely amiable, in spite of all the imperfections and sins that imbitter it, in vain do I stand here describing it to you. However, condescend at least to see whither every living thing is tending; and allow me to perform the duty of this day, which requires me to treat of the dying and the dead. A modern author hath published a book with this singular title, *subterranean Rome*, a title full of instruction and truth, a title that may serve to teach that living haughty city, that there is another Rome dead and buried, a natural image of what the present Rome must shortly be. Such an object I present to you. I present you your republic, not the republic you see composed of living magistrates, generals, and heads of families; this is superficial, the surface of your republic: but I would fix your eyes on an interior subterranean republic. There is a state under your feet. Go down. Go into the cells under the earth. Lift up the lids of the coffins. What do you see there, what have you found there? My God! What inhabitants! What citizens! What a republic!

This is not all. Go further. Carry your eyes beyond these caverns. Exercise that faith, which gives *substance to things not seen*. Think of the souls, which once animated this dust, and ashes, and bones. Where are they? Some are in a state of felicity, others in depths of misery. Some

Some in the bosom of God, others in prison with devils. Some *drinking of rivers of pleasures for evermore*, others *having their portion in the lake of fire*, the *smoke rising up for ever and ever*, Psal. xxxvi. 8. and xvi. 11. and Rev. xix. 3. To say all in one word, some for abandoning themselves to the world are suffering such punishments as the world inflicts on its slaves; and others for devoting themselves to God are receiving such rewards as God bestows on his servants. May this contrast penetrate, affect, and transform you all! And thou, great God, give weight to our exhortations in order to give success to our benedictions!

I gladly embrace the opportunity of assisting at this solemnity, of coming to you, my dear brethren, at this auspicious season, and of preaching to you now that it is allowable to open the bottom of a heart always full of most respectful affection for this city, and this church*. Receive my good wishes as affectionately as they are dictated.

Magistrates, to whom providence hath committed the reins of government, you are above our benediction. But we are ministers of a master, who governs all mankind, and from that source of splendour, magnificence and wealth, we derive the benedictions, which we diffuse on your august heads. May God inspire you with that elevation of mind, that magnanimity and holy ambition which impel magistrates, with whom he hath intrusted the sword of justice, to found all their deliberations and decrees on equity? May God inspire you with such charity, condescension and affability as may blend the parent with the master! May God inspire you with such humility and self-denial as incline christian magistrates to lay their power at the feet of the great Supreme, and to place their glory in rendering to God a faithful account of their administration? Great will that account be. You are, to a certain degree, responsible both for the temporal and eternal happiness of this people. The eternal happiness of a people often depends on the conduct of their governors, on the care they take to restrain licentiousness, to suppress scandalous books, to make solemn festivals observed, to procure wise, zealous, and faithful ministers for the church. Magistrates, who enter into these noble designs, have a right to expect from God all the assistance necessary to effect them. To thee, almighty God, we address our prayers for such assistance for these illustriuos persons!

O that

* Of Rotterdam.

O that our petitions may enter heaven, and our prayers be heard and answered!

Ministers, my dear coadjutors in the great work of salvation, successors of the apostles in *the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ!* Eph. iv. 12. God hath set narrow limits to what the world calls our preferment and fortune. The religion we profess doth not allow us to aspire after such high sounding titles, eminent posts, and splendid equipages as confound the ministers of temporal kings with the ministers of that Jesus, whose *kingdom is not of this world:* but what we lose in regard to the glittering advantages of the world, we gain in regard to zeal and substantial advantages; if we ourselves understand that religion, which we teach others, and if we feel the spirit of that calling, with which God hath honoured us. May God grant, may the God who hath honoured us grant us such knowledge and virtue as are essential to the worthy discharge of our duty! May he bestow all that intrepidity, which is always necessary to resist the enemies of our holy reformation, and sometimes those, who under the name of reformed endeavour to counteract and destroy it! May he support us under the perpetual contradictions we meet with in the course of our ministry, and invigorate us with the hopes of those high degrees in glory, which await such as *turn many to righteousness, who shall shine as the stars for ever and ever!* Dan. xii. 3.

Merchants, you are the pillars of this republic, and you are the means of our enjoying prosperity and plenty. May God continue to bless your commerce! May he cause winds and waves, nature and every element to unite in your favour! Above all, may God teach you the holy skill of placing your *heart where your treasure is;* of *making yourselves friends* of the *mammon of righteousness,* Matt. vi. 21. Luke xvi. 9. of sanctifying your prosperity by your charity, especially on such a day as this, in which we should make conscience of paying a homage of love to a *God who is love,* and whose goodness hath brought us to see this day.

Fathers and mothers of families, with whom I have the honour and happiness of joining myself, may God help us to consider our children not merely as formed for this world, but as intelligent and immortal beings, made for eternity! May God grant, we may be infinitely more desirous to

see them happy in heaven than prosperous on earth! May God continue these children, so necessary to the pleasure of our lives to our last moments! God grant, if we be required to give them up to the grave, we may have all the submission, that is necessary to sustain such violent shocks!

My brethren, this article cuts the thread of my discourse. May God answer all the prayers I have uttered, and that far greater number which I have suppressed! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THE PASSIONS.

1 Pet. ii. 2.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you *as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

THE words you have heard, my brethren, offer four subjects of meditation to your minds. First the nature of the passions—secondly the disorders of them—thirdly the remedies to be applied—and lastly the motives that engage us to subdue them. In the first place we will give you a general idea of what the apostle calls *fleshly lusts*, or in modern style the passions. We will examine secondly *the war* which they wage *against the soul.* Our third part will inform you of the means of *abstaining* from these fleshly lusts. And in the last place we will endeavour to make you feel the power of this motive, *as strangers and pilgrims*, and to press home this exhortation of the apostle, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

I. In order to understand the nature of the passions, we will explain the subject by a few preliminary remarks.

1. An intelligent being ought to love every thing that can elevate, perpetuate, and make him happy; and to avoid whatever can degrade, confine, and render him miserable. This, far from being a human depravity, is a perfection of nature. Man hath it in common with celestial intelligences, and with God himself. This reflection removes a false sense, which the language of St. Peter may seem at first to convey, as if the apostle meant by eradicating *fleshly lusts* to destroy

the true interest of man. The most ancient enemies of the christian religion loaded it with this reproach, because they did not understand it; and some superficial people, who know no more of religion than the surface, pretend to render it odious by the same means. Under pretence that the christian religion forbids ambition, they say it degrades man, and under pretence that it forbids misguided self-love, they say it makes man miserable. A gross error! A false idea of christianity! If the gospel humbles, it is to elevate us; if it forbids a self-love ill-directed, it is in order to conduct us to substantial happiness. By *fleshly lusts* St. Peter doth not mean such desires of the heart as puts us on aspiring after real happiness and true glory.

2. An intelligent being united to a body, and lodged, if I may speak so, in a portion of matter, under this law, that according to the divers motions of this matter he shall receive sensations of pleasure or pain, must naturally love to excite within himself sensations of pleasure, and to avoid painful feelings. This is agreeable to the institution of the Creator. He intends, for reasons of adorable wisdom, to preserve a society of mankind for several ages on earth. To accomplish this design he hath so ordered it that what contributes to the support of the body shall give the soul pleasure, and that what would dissolve it would give pain, so that by these means we may preserve ourselves. Aliments are agreeable; the dissolution of the parts of our bodies is painful; love, hatred, and anger, properly understood, and exercised to a certain degree are natural and fit. The stoics, who annihilated the passions, did not know man, and the schoolmen, who to comfort people under the gout or the stone told them that a rational man ought not to pay any regard to what passed in his body, never made many disciples among wise men. This observation affords us a second clue to the meaning of the apostle: at least it gives us a second precaution to avoid an error. By *fleshly lusts* he doth not mean a natural inclination to preserve the body and the ease of life; he allows love, hatred and anger to a certain degree, and as far as the exercise of them doth not prejudice a greater interest. Observe well this last expression, as far as may be without prejudice to a greater interest. The truth of our second reflection depends on this restriction.

3. A being composed of two substances, one of which is more excellent than the other; a being placed between two interests, one of which is greater than the other, ought, when

when these two interests clash, to prefer the more noble before the less noble, the greater interest before the less. This third principle is a third clue to what St. Peter calls *lusts*, or passions. Man hath two substances, and two interests. As far as he can without prejudicing his eternal interest he ought to endeavour to promote his temporal interest: but when the two clash he ought to sacrifice the less to the greater. *Fleshly lusts* is put for what is irregular and depraved in our desires, and what makes us prefer the body before the soul, a temporal before an eternal interest. That this is the meaning of the apostle is clear from his calling these passions or *lusts fleshly*. What is the meaning of this word? The scripture generally uses the word in two senses. Sometimes it is literally and properly put for flesh, and sometimes it signifies sin. St. Peter calls the passions *fleshly* in both these senses; in the first because some come from the body as voluptuousness, anger, drunkenness, and in the second because they spring from our depravity. Hence the apostle Paul puts among the works of the flesh both those which have their seat in the body, and those which have in a manner no connection with it. *Now the works of the flesh are these, adultery, lasciviousness, idolatry, heresies, envyings.* According to this the *works of the flesh* are not only such as are seated in the flesh (for envy and heresy cannot be of this sort) but all depraved dispositions.

This is a general idea of the passions: but as it is vague and obscure, we will endeavour to explain it more distinctly, and with this view we will shew—first what the passions do in the mind—next what they do in the senses—thirdly what they are in the imagination—and lastly what they are in the heart. Four portraits of the passions, four explications of the condition of man. In order to connect the matter more closely, as we shew you what *fleshly lusts* are in these four views, we will endeavour to convince you that in these four respects they *war against the soul.* The second part of our discourse therefore, which was to treat of the disorders of the passions, will be included in the first, which explains their nature.

1. The passions produce in the *mind* a strong attention to whatever can justify and gratify them. The most odious objects may be so placed as to appear agreeable, and the most lovely objects so as to appear odious. There is no absurdity so palpable but it may be made to appear likely; and there

there is no truth so clear but it may be made to appear doubtful. A passionate man fixes all the attention of his mind on such sides of objects as favour his passion, and this is the source of innumerable false judgings, of which we are every day witnesses and authors.

If you observe all the passions, you will find they have all this character. What is vengeance in the mind of a vindictive man? It is a fixed attention to all the favourable lights in which vengeance may be considered; it is a continual study to avoid every odious light in which the subject may be placed. On the one side, there is a certain deity in the world, who hath made revenge a law. This deity is worldly honour, and at the bar of this judge to forget injuries is mean, and to pardon them cowardice. On the other side vengeance disturbs society, usurps the office of the magistrate, and violates the precepts of religion. A dispassionate man, examining without prejudice this question, ought I to revenge the injury I have received, would weigh all these motives, consider each apart, and all together, and would determine to act according as the most just and weighty reasons should determine him: but a revengeful man considers none but the first, he pays no attention to the last; he always exclaims, my honour, my honour, he never says my religion and my salvation.

What is hatred? It is a close attention to a man's imperfections. Is any man free? Is any man so imperfect as to have nothing good in him? Is there nothing to compensate his defects? This man is not handsome, but he is wise: his genius is not lively, but his heart is sincere: he cannot assist you with money, but he can give you much good advice supported by an excellent example: he is not either prince, king, or emperor, but he is a man, a christian, a believer, and in all these respects he deserves esteem. The passionate man turns away his eyes from all these advantageous sides, and attends only to the rest. Is it astonishing that he hates a person, in whom he sees nothing but imperfection? Thus a counsellor opens and sets forth his cause with such artifice that law seems to be clearly on his side; he forgets one fact, suppresses one circumstance, omits to draw one inference, which being brought forward to view entirely change the nature of the subject, and his client loses his cause. In the same manner, a defender of a false religion always revolves in his mind the arguments, that seem to establish it, and never recollects those, which subvert it. He will curtail a sentence,

sentence, cut off what goes before, leave out what follows, and retain only such detached expressions as seem to countenance his error, but which in connection with the rest would strip it of all probability. What is still more singular is, that love to true religion, that love, which under the direction of reason opens a wide field of argument and evidence, engageth us in this sort of false judging, when we give ourselves up to it through passion or prejudice.

This is what the passions do in the mind, and it is easy to comprehend the reason St. Peter had to say in this view, *fleshly lusts war against the soul.* Certainly one of the noblest advantages of man is to reason, to examine proofs and weigh motives, to consider an object on every side, to combine the various arguments that are alleged either for or against a proposition, in order on these grounds to regulate our ideas and opinions, our hatred and our love. The passionate man renounces this advantage, he never reasons in a passon, his mind is limited, his soul is in chains, his *fleshly passions war against his soul.*

Having examined the passions in the mind, let us consider them in the *senses.* To comprehend this, recollect what we just now said, that the passions owe their origin to the Creator, who instituted them for the purpose of preserving us. When an object would injure health or life, it is necessary to our safety, that there should be an emotion in our senses to effect a quick escape from the danger; fear does this. A man struck with the idea of sudden danger hath a rapidity, which he could not have in a tranquil state, or during a cool trial of his power. It is necessary, when an enemy approaches to destroy us, that our senses should so move as to animate us with a power of resistance. Anger doth this, for it is a collection of spirits . . . . but allow me to borrow here the words of a modern philosopher, who hath admirably expressed the motions excited by the passions in our bodies. "Before the sight of an object of passion, saith he, the spirits were diffused through all the body to preserve every part alike, but on the appearance of this new object the whole system is shaken; the greater part of the animal spirits rush into all the exterior parts of the body, in order to put it into a condition proper to produce such motions as are necessary to acquire the good, or to avoid the evil now present. If it happen that the power of man is unequal to his wants, these same spirits distribute themselves so as to make him utter mechanically certain words and cries,

cries, and so as to spread over his countenance and over the rest of his body an air capable of agitating others with the same passion, with which he himself is moved. For as men and other animals are united together by eyes and ears, when any one is agitated he necessarily shakes all others that see and hear him, and naturally produces painful feelings in their imaginations, which interest them in his relief. The rest of the spirits rush violently into the heart, the lungs, the liver, and the other vitals, in order to lay all the parts under contribution, and hastily to derive from them as quick as possible the spirits necessary for the preservation of the body in these extraordinary efforts*." Such are the movements excited by the passions in the senses, and all these to a certain degree are necessary for the preservation of our bodies, and are the institutions of our Creator: but three things are necessary to preserve order in these emotions. First they must never be excited in the body without the direction of the will and the reason. Secondly they must always be proportional, I mean, the emotion of fear, for example, must never be except in sight of objects capable of hurting us; the emotion of anger must never be except in sight of an enemy, who actually hath both the will and the power of injuring our well being. And thirdly they must always stop when and where we will they should. When the passions subvert this order they violate three wise institutes of our Creator.

The motions excited by the passions in our senses are not *free*. An angry man is carried beyond himself in spite of himself. A voluptuous man receives a sensible impression from an exterior object, and in spite of all the dictates of reason throws himself into a flaming fire that consumes him.

The emotions excited by the passions in our senses are not *proportional*; I mean that a timorous man, for example, turns as pale at the sight of a fanciful as of a real danger; he sometimes fears a phantom and a substance alike. A man, *whose God is his belly*, feels his appetite as much excited by a dish fatal to his health as by one necessary to support his strength, and to keep him alive.

The emotions excited by the passions in our senses do not obey the orders of our *will*. The movement is an overflow of spirits, which no reflections can restrain. It is not a gentle fire to give the blood a warmth necessary to its circulation;

* Malebranche, Recherche de la verite l. 5. c. 3.

culation; it is a volcano pouring out its flame all liquid and destructive on every side. It is not a gentle stream, purling in its proper bed, meandering through the fields, and moistening, refreshing and invigorating them as it goes: but it is a rapid flood, breaking down all its banks, carrying every where mire and mud, sweeping away the harvest, subverting hills and trees, and carrying away every thing on all sides that oppose its passage. This is what the passions do in the senses, and do you not conceive, my brethren, that in this second respect they *war against the soul?*

They *war against the soul* by the disorders they introduce into that body, which they ought to preserve. They dissipate the spirits, weaken the memory, wear out the brain. Behold those trembling hands, those discoloured eyes, that body bent and bowed down to the ground; these are the effects of violent passions. When the body is in such a state, it is easy to conceive, that the soul suffers with it. The union between the two is so close that the alteration of the one necessarily alters the other. When the capacity of the soul is absorbed by painful sensations, we are incapable of attending to truth. If the spirits, necessary to support us in meditation, be dissipated, we can no longer meditate. If the brain, which must be of a certain consistence to receive impressions of objects, have lost that consistence it can recover it no more.

They *war against the soul* by disconcerting the whole economy of man, and by making him consider such sensations of pleasure as providence gave him only for the sake of engaging him to preserve his body as a sort of supreme good, worthy of all his care and attention for its own sake.

They *war against the soul* because they reduce it to a state of slavery to the body, over which it ought to rule. Is any thing more unworthy of an immortal soul than to follow no other rule of judging than an agitation of the organs of the body, the heat of the blood, the motion of animal spirits? And doth not this daily happen to a passionate man? A man, who reasons fairly when his senses are tranquil, doth he not reason like an idiot when his senses are agitated? Cool and dispassionate, he thinks, he ought to eat and drink only what is necessary to support his health and his life, at most to *receive with thanksgiving* such innocent pleasures as religion allows him to enjoy: but when his senses are agitated, his taste becomes dainty, and he thinks he may glut

himself with food, drown himself in wine, and give himself up without reserve to all the excesses of voluptuousness. When his senses were cool and tranquil, he thought it sufficient to oppose precautions of prudence against the designs of an enemy to his injury: but when his senses are agitated, he thinks, he ought to attack him, fall on him, stab him, kill him. When he was cool, he was free, he was a sovereign; but now that his senses are agitated, he is a subject, he is a slave. Base submission! Unworthy slavery! We blush for human nature, when we see it in such bondage. Behold that man, he hath as many virtues, perhaps, more than most men. Examine him on the article of good breeding. He perfectly understands, and scrupulously observes all the laws of it. Examine him on the point of disinterestedness. He abounds in it, and to see the manner in which he gives, you would say, he thought, he increased his fortune by bestowing it in acts of benevolence. Examine him concerning religion. He respects the majesty of it, he always pronounces the name of God with veneration, he never thinks of his works without admiration, or his attributes without reverence and fear. Place this man at a gaming table, put the dice or the cards in his hand, and you will know him no more; he loses all self-possession, he forgets politeness, disinterestedness and religion, he insults his fellow creatures and blasphemes his God. His soul teems with avarice, his body is distorted, his thoughts are troubled, his temper is changed, his countenance turns pale, his eyes sparkle, his mouth foams, his spirits are in a flame, he is another man, no it is not a man, it is a wild beast, it is a devil.

We never give ourselves up thus to our senses without feeling some pleasure, and, what is very dreadful, this pleasure abides in the memory, makes deep traces in the brain, in a word imprints itself on the imagination: and this leads us to our third article, in which we are to consider what the passions do in the imagination.

If the senses were excited to act only by the presence of objects: if the soul were agitated only by the action of the senses, one single mean would suffice to guard us from irregular passions; that would be to flee from the object that excites them: but the passions produce other disorders, they leave deep impressions on the *imagination*. When we give ourselves up to the senses, we feel pleasure, this pleasure strikes

strikes the imagination, and the imagination thus struck with the pleasure it hath found recollects it, and solicits the passionate man to return to objects, that made him so happy.

Thus old men have sometimes miserable remains of a passion, which seems to suppose a certain constitution, and which should seem to be extinct, as the constitution implied is no more: but the recollection that such and such objects had been the cause of such and such pleasures is dear to their souls; they love to remember them, they make them a part of all their conversations, they draw flattering portraits, and by recounting their past pleasures indemnify themselves for the prohibition, under which old age hath laid them. For the same reason it is, that a worldling, who hath plunged himself into all the dissipations of life, find it so difficult to renounce the world when he comes to die. Indeed a body borne down with illness, a nature almost extinct, senses half dead seem improper habitations of love to sensual pleasure: and yet imagination struck with past pleasure tells this skeleton, that the world is amiable, that always when he went into it he enjoyed a real pleasure, and that, on the contrary, always when he performed religious exercises he felt pain; and this lively impression gives such a man a present aversion to religion; it incessantly turns his mind towards the objects of which death is about to deprive him, so that, without a miracle of grace, he can never look towards the objects of religion with desire and pleasure.

We go further. We affirm, that the disorders of the passions in the imagination far exceed those in the senses; the action of the senses is limited: but that of the imagination is boundless, so that the difference is almost as great as that between finite and infinite, if you will pardon the expression. A man, who actually tastes pleasure in debauchery, feels this pleasure, but he does not persuade himself that he feels it more than he does: but a man, who indulges his fancy, forms most extravagant ideas, for imagination magnifies some objects, creates others, accumulates phantom upon phantom, and fills up a vast space with ideal joys, which have no originals in nature. Hence it comes to pass that we are more pleased with imaginary ideas, than with the actual enjoyment of what we imagine, because imagination having made boundless promises, it gladdens the soul

with the hope of more to supply the want of what present objects fail of producing.

O deplorable state of man! The littleness of his mind will not allow him to contemplate any object but that of his passion, while it is present to his senses; it will not allow him then to recollect the motives, the great motives that should impel him to his duty: and when the object is absent, not being able to offer it to his senses, he presents it again to his imagination clothed with new and foreign charms, deceitful ideas of which make up for its absence, and excite in him a love more violent than that of actual possession, when he felt at least the folly and vanity of it. O horrid *war* of the passions *against the soul!* Shut the door of your closets against the enchanting object, it will enter with you. Try to get rid of it by traversing plains, and fields, and whole countries; cleave the waves of the sea, fly on the wings of the wind, and try to put between yourself and your enchantress the deep the rolling ocean, she will travel with you, sail with you, every where haunt you, because wherever you go you will carry yourself, and within you, deep in your imagination the bewitching image impressed.

Let us consider, in fine, the passions in the *heart*, and the disorders they cause there. What can fill the heart of man? A prophet hath answered this question, and hath included all morality in one point, *my chief good is to draw near to God*, Psal. lxxiii. 28. but as God doth not commune with us immediately, while we are in this world, but imparts felicity by means of creatures, he hath given these creatures two characters, which, being well examined by a reasonable man, conduct him to the Creator, but which turn the passionate man aside. On the one hand, creatures render us happy to a certain degree, this is their first character: on the other hand, they leave a void in the soul, which they are incapable of filling, this is their second character. This is the design of God, and this design the passions oppose. Let us hear a reasonable man draw conclusions, and let us observe what opposite conclusions a passionate man draws.

The reasonable man saith, creatures leave a void in my soul, which they are incapable of filling: but what effect should this produce in my heart, and what end had God in setting bounds so strait to that power of making me happy, which he communicated to them? It was to reclaim me to himself, to persuade me that he only can make me happy;

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it was to make me say to myself, my desires are eternal, whatever is not eternal is unequal to my desires; my passions are infinite, whatever is not infinite is beneath my passions, and God only can satisfy them.

A passionate man, from the void he finds in the creatures, draws conclusions directly opposite. Each creature in particular is incapable of making me happy: but could I unite them all, could I, so to speak, extract the substantial from all, certainly nothing would be wanting to my happiness. In this miserable supposition he becomes full of perturbation, he launches out, he collects, he accumulates. It is not enough to acquire conveniences, he must have superfluities. It is not enough that my name be known in my family, and among my acquaintance, it must be spread over the whole city, the province, the kingdom, the four parts of the globe. Every clime illuminated by the sun shall know that I exist, and that I have a superior genius. It is not enough to conquer some hearts, I will subdue all, and display the astonishing art of uniting all voices in my favour; men divided in opinion about every thing else shall agree in one point, that is, to celebrate my praise. It is not enough to have many inferiors, I must have no master, no equal, I must be an universal monarch, and subdue the whole world; and when I shall have accomplished these vast designs, I will seek other creatures to subdue, and more worlds to conquer. Thus the passions disconcert the plan of God! Such are the conclusions of a heart infatuated with passion!

The disciple of reason saith, creatures contribute to render me happy to a certain degree: but this power is not their own. Gross, sensible, material beings cannot contribute to the happiness of a spiritual creature. If creatures can augment my happiness, it is because God hath lent them a power natural only to himself. God is then the source of felicity, and all I see elsewhere is only an emanation of his essence: but if the streams be so pure, what is the fountain! If effects be so noble, what is the cause! If rays be so luminous, what is the source of light from which they proceed!

The conclusions of an impassioned man are directly opposite. Saith he, creatures render me happy to a certain degree, therefore, they are the cause of my happiness, they deserve all my efforts, they shall be my God. Thus the passionate man renders to his aliments, his gold, his silver, his equipage, his horses, the most noble act of adoration. For what is the most noble act of adoration? Is it to build temples?

ples? To erect altars? To kill victims? To sacrifice burnt offerings? To burn incense? No. It is that inclination of our heart to union with God, that aspiring to possess him, that love, that effusion of soul, which makes us exclaim, *My chief good is to draw near to God.* This homage the man of passion renders to the object of his passions, *his God is his belly*, his *covetousness his idolatry*; and this is what *fleshly lusts* become in the heart. They remove us from God, and, by removing us from him, deprive us of all the good that proceeds from a union with the supreme good, and thus make *war* with every part of ourselves, and with every moment of our duration.

War against our reason, for instead of deriving, by virtue of a union to God, assistance necessary to the practice of what reason approves, and what grace only renders practicable, we are given up to our evil dispositions, and compelled by our passions to do what our reason abhors.

War against the regulation of life, for instead of putting on, by virtue of union to God, the *easy yoke*, and taking up the *light burden* which religion imposes, we become slaves of envy, vengeance and ambition; we are weighed down with a yoke of iron, which we have no power to get rid of, even though we groan under its intolerable weightiness.

War against conscience, for instead of being justified, by virtue of a union with God, and having *peace with him through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1. and feeling that heaven begun, *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. by following our passions we become a prey to distracting fears, troubles without end, cutting remorse, and awful earnests of eternal misery.

War on a dying bed, for whereas by being united to God our death bed would have become a field of triumph, where the prince of life, the conqueror of death, would have made us share his victory, by abandoning ourselves to our passions, we see nothing in a dying hour but an awful futurity, a frowning governor, the bare idea of which alarms, terrifies, and drives us to despair.

III. We have seen the nature, and the disorders of the passions, now let us examine what *remedies* we ought to apply. In order to prevent and correct the disorders, which the passions produce in the mind, we must observe the following rules.

1. *We*

1. *We must avoid precipitance, and suspend our judgment.* It doth not depend on us to have clear ideas of all things: but we have power to suspend our judgment till we obtain evidence of the nature of the object before us. This is one of the greatest advantages of an intelligent being. A celebrated divine hath such an high idea of this that he maintains this hyperbolical thesis, that "always when we mistake, even in things indifferent in themselves we sin, because then we abuse our reason, the use of which consists in never determining without evidence*." Though we suppose this divine hath exceeded the matter, yet it is certain, that a wise man can never take too much pains to form a habit of not judging a point, not considering it as useful or advantageous till after he hath examined it on every side. "Let a man, saith a philosopher of great name, let a man only pass one year in the world, hearing all they say, and believing nothing, entering every moment into himself, and suspending his judgment till truth and evidence appear, and I will esteem him more learned than Aristotle, wiser than Socrates, and a greater man than Plato†."

2. A man must *reform even his education.* In every family the minds of children are turned to a certain point. Every family hath its prejudice, I had almost said, its absurdity; and hence it comes to pass that people despise the profession they do not exercise. Hear the merchant; he will tell you, that nothing so much deserves the attention of mankind as trade, as acquiring money by every created thing, as knowing the value of this, and the worth of that, as taxing, so to speak, all the works of art, and all the productions of nature. Hear the man of learning; he will tell you, that the perfection of man consists in literature, that there is a difference as essential between a scholar and a man of no literature, as between a rational creature and a brute. Hear the soldier; he will tell you, that the man of science is a pedant, who ought to be confined to the dirt and darkness of the schools, that the merchant is the most sordid part of society, and that nothing is so noble as the profession of arms. One would think, to hear him talk, that the sword by his side is a patent for pre-eminence, and that mankind have no need of any people, who cannot rout an army, cut through a squadron, or scale a wall. Hear him who hath got

* Elie. Saurin. Reflex. sur la conscien. sect. 2.
† Malebranche.

got the disease of quality; he will tell you, that other men are nothing but reptiles beneath his feet, that human blood, stained every where else, is pure only in his veins. That nobility serves for every thing, for genius, and education, and fortune, and sometimes even for common sense and good faith. Hear the peasant; he will tell you, that a nobleman is an enthusiast for appropriating to himself the virtues of his ancestors, and for pretending to find in old quaint names, and in worm eaten papers, advantages, which belong only to real and actual abilities. As I said before, each family hath its prejudice, every profession hath its folly, all proceeding from this principle, because we consider objects only in one point of view. To correct ourselves on this article, we must go to the source, examine how our minds were directed in our childhood; in a word, we must review, and reform even our education.

3. In fine, *we must*, as well as we can, *choose a friend* wise enough to know truth, and generous enough to impart it to others; a man who will shew us an object on every side, when we are inclined to consider it only on one. I say, as well as you can, for to give this rule is to suppose two things, both sometimes alike impracticable; the one, that such a man can be found, and the other, that he will be heard with deference. When we are so happy as to find this inestimable treasure, we have found a remedy of marvellous efficacy against the disorders, which the passions produce in the mind. Let us make the trial. Suppose a faithful friend should address one of you in this manner. Heaven hath united in your favour the most happy circumstances. The blood of the greatest heroes animates you, and your name alone is an encomium. Beside this you have an affluent fortune, and providence hath given you abundance to support your dignity, and to discharge every thing that your splendid station requires. You have also a fine and acute genius, and your natural talents are cultivated by an excellent education. Your health seems free from the infirmities of life, and if any man may hope for a long duration here, you are the man who may expect it. With all these noble advantages you may aspire at any thing. But one thing is wanting. You are dazzled with your own splendor, and your feeble eyes are almost put out with the brilliancy of your condition. Your imagination struck with the idea of the prince, whom you have the honour to serve, makes you consider yourself as a kind of royal personage. You have formed your family

tily on the plan of the court. You are proud, arrogant, haughty. Your seat resembles a tribunal, and all your expressions are sentences from which it is a crime to appeal. As you will never suffer yourself to be contradicted, you seem to be applauded: but a sacrifice is made to your vanity and not to your merit, and people bow not to your reason but to your tyranny. As they fear you avail yourself of your credit to brave others, each endeavours to oppose you, and to throw down in your absence the altar he had erected in your presence, and on which no incense sincerely offered burns, except that which you yourself put there.

So much for irregular passions in the mind. Let us now lay down a few rules for the government of the *senses.*

Before we proceed, we cannot help deploring the misery of a man, who is impelled by the disorders of his senses, and the heat of his constitution to criminal passions. Such a man often deserve pity more than indignation. A bad constitution is sometimes compatible with a good heart. We cannot think without trembling of an ungrateful man, a cheat, a traitor, an assassin; for their crimes always suppose liberty of mind, and consent of will: but a man driven from the post of duty by the heat of his blood, by an overflow of humours, by the fermentation and flame of his spirits, often sins by constraint, and, so to speak, protests against his crime even while he commits it. Hence we often see angry people become full of love and pity, always inclining to forgive, or always ready to ask pardon; while others cold, calm, tranquil, revolve eternal hatreds in their souls, and leave them for an inheritance for their children.

However, though the irregularity of the senses diminishes the atrociousness of the crime, yet it cannot excuse those, who do not make continual efforts to correct it. To acknowledge that we are constitutionally inclined to violate the laws of God, and to live quietly in practices directed by constitutional heat, is to have the interior tainted. It is an evidence that the malady, which at first attacked only the exterior of the man, hath communicated itself to all the frame, and infected the vitals. We oppose this against the frivolous excuses of some sinners, who while they abandon themselves like brute beasts to the most guilty passions, lay all the blame on the misfortune of their constitution. They say, their will hath no part in their excesses—they cannot change their constitution—and God cannot justly blame them for ir-

regularities, which proceed from the natural union of the soul with the body. Indeed they prove by their talk that they would be very sorry not to have a constitution to serve for an apology for sin, and to cover the licentiousness of casting off an obligation, which the law of God, according to them, requires of none but such as have received from nature the power of discharging it. If these maxims be admitted, what becomes of the morality of Jesus Christ? What become of the commands concerning mortification and repentance? But people, who talk thus, intend less to correct their faults than to palliate them; and this discourse is intended only for such as are willing to apply means to free themselves from the dominion of irregular passions.

Certainly the best advice that can be given to a man, whose constitution inclines him to sin, is, that he avoid opportunities, and flee from such objects as affect and disconcert him. It doth not depend on you to be unconcerned in sight of an object fatal to your innocence: but it does depend on you to keep out of the way of seeing it. It doth not depend on you to be animated at the sight of a gaming table: but it doth depend on you to avoid such whimsical places, where sharping goes for merit. Let us not be presumptuous. Let us make diffidence a principle of virtue. Let us remember St Peter, he was fired with zeal, he thought every thing possible to his love, his presumption was the cause of his fall, and many by following his example have yielded to temptation, and have found the truth of an apocryphal maxim, *he that loveth danger shall perish therein*, Eccles. iii. 26.

After all that virtue, which owes its firmness only to the want of an opportunity for vice, is very feeble and it argues very little attainment only to be able to resist our passions in the absence of temptation. I recollect a maxim of St. Paul, *I wrote unto you not to company with fornicators*, but I did not mean that you should have no conversation *with fornicators of this world, for then must ye needs go out of the world*, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. Literally, to avoid all objects dangerous to our passions, *we must go out of the world*. Are there no remedies adapted to the necessity we are under of living among mankind? Is there no such thing as correcting, with the assistance of grace, he irregularities of our constitution, and freeing ourselves from its dominion, so that we may be able, if not to seek out temptations for the sake of the glory of subduing them, at least to resist them, and not suffer them to conquer us, when

when in spite of all our caution they will attack us? Three remedies are necessary to our success in this painful undertaking: to suspend acts—to flee idleness—to mortify sense.

We must *suspend acts.* Let us form a just idea of temperament, or constitution. It consists in one of these two things, or in both together; in a disposition of organs, in the nature of animal spirits. For example, a man is angry, when the organs, which serve that passion, are more accessible than others, and when his animal spirits are easily heated. Hence it necessarily follows, that two things must be done to correct constitutional anger; the one the disposition of the organs must be changed; and the other the nature of the spirits must be changed, so that on the one hand, the spirits no longer finding these organs disposed to give them passage, and, on the other hand the spirits having lost a facility of taking fire, there will be within the man none of the revolutions of sense, which he could not resist when they were excited.

A suspension of acts changeth the disposition of the organs. The more the spirits enter into these organs, the more easy is the access, and the propensity insurmountable; the more acts of anger there are, the more corrigible anger become; because the more acts of anger there are, the more accessible will the organs of anger be, so that the animal spirits will naturally fall there by their own motion. The spirits then must be restrained. The biass they have to the ways, to which they have been habituated by the practice of sin, must be turned, and we must always remember a truth often inculcated, that is, that the more acts of sin we commit the more difficult to correct will habits of sin become; but that when, by taking pains with ourselves, we have turned the course of the spirits, they will take different ways, and this is done by suspending the acts.

It is not impossible to change even the nature of our animal spirits. This is done by suspending what contributed to nourish them in a state of disorder. What contributes to the nature of spirits? Diet, exercise, air, the whole course of life we live. It is very difficult, in a discourse like this, to to give a full catalogue of remedies proper to regulate the animal spirits and the humours of the body. I believe it would be dangerous to many people. Some men are so made, that reflections too accurate on this article would be more likely to increase their vices than to diminish them.

However, there is not one person willing to turn his attention to this subject, who is not able to become a preacher to himself. Let a man enter into himself, let him survey the history of his excesses, let him examine all circumstances, let him recollect what passed within him on such and such occasions, let him closely consider what moved and agitated him, and he will learn more by such a meditation, that all sermons and casuistical books can teach him.

The second remedy is to *avoid idleness.* What is idleness? It is that situation of soul, in which no effort is made to direct the course of the spirits this way rather than that. What must happen then? We have supposed, that some organs of a man constitutionally irregular are more accessible than others. When we are idle, and make no efforts to direct the animal spirits, they naturally take the easiest way, and consequently direct their own course to those organs which passion hath made easy of access. To avoid this disorder, we must be employed, and always employed. This rule is neither impracticable, nor difficult. We do not mean, that the soul should be always on the stretch in meditation or prayer. An innocent recreation, an easy conversation, agreable exercise may have each its place in occupations of this kind. For these reasons we applaud those, who make such maxims part of the education of youth, as either to teach them an art, or employ them in some bodily exercise. Not that we propose this maxim as it is received in some families, where they think all the merit of a young gentleman consists in hunting, riding, or some exercise of that kind; and that of a young lady in distinguishing herself in dancing, music, or needle-work. We mean, that these employments should be subordinate to others more serious, and more worthy of an immortal soul, that they should serve only for relaxation, so that by thus taking part in the innocent pleasures of the world, we may be better prepared to avoid the guilty pursuits of it.

The third remedy is *mortification of the senses,* a remedy which St. Paul always used, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection,* 1 Cor. ix. 27. Few people have such sound notions. Some casuists have stretched the subject beyond its due bounds so as to establish this principle, that sinful man can enjoy no pleasure without a crime, because sin having been his delight, pain ought to be for ever his lot. This principle may perhaps be probable considered in regard to unregenerate men: but it cannot be admitted in

regard

regard to true christians. Accordingly, we place among those, who have unsound notions of mortification, all such as make it consist in vain practices, useless in themselves, and having no relation to the principal design of religion, *bodily exercises profiting little*: they are *commandments of men*, in the language of scripture.

But if some have entertained extravagant notions of mortification, others have restrained the subject too much. Under pretence that the religion of Jesus Christ is spiritual, they have neglected the study and practice of evangelical morality: but we have heard the example of St. Paul, and it is our duty to imitate it. We must *keep under the body*, and *bring it into subjection*, the senses must be bridled by violence, innocent things must often be refused them, in order to obtain the mastery when they require unlawful things; we must fast, we must avoid ease, because it tends to effeminacy. All this is difficult, I grant: but if the undertaking be hazardous, success will be glorious*. Thirty, forty years, employed in reforming an irregular constitution, ought not to be regretted. What a glory to have subdued the senses! What a glory to have restored the soul to its primitive superiority, to have crucified the *body of sin*, to lead it in triumph, and to *destroy*, that is to *annihilate it*, according to an expression of scripture, and so to approach those pure spirits, in whom the motions of matter can make no alteration!

The disorders produced by the passions in the imagination, and against which also we ought to furnish you with some remedies, are like those complicated disorders, which require opposite remedies, because they are the effect of opposite causes, so that the means employed to diminish one part not unfrequently increase another. It should seem at first, that the best remedy, which can be applied to disorders introduced by the passions into the imagination, is well to consider the nature of the objects of the passions, and thoroughly to know the world: and yet on the other hand, it may truly be said, that the most certain way of succeeding would be to know nothing at all about the world. If you know the pleasures of the world, if you know by experience the pleasure of gratifying a passion, you will fall into the misfortune we wish you to avoid, you will receive bad impressions, you will acquire dangerous recollections, and

* See a beautiful passage of Plato in his eighth book Delegibus.

and a seducing memory will be a new occasion of sin: but if you do not know the pleasures of the world, you will be likely to form ideas too flattering of it, you will create images more beautiful than the originals themselves, and by the immense value you set upon the victim, when you are just going to offer up perhaps you will retreat, and not make the sacrifice. Hence we often see persons, whom the superstition, or avarice of their families hath in childhood confined in a nunnery (suppose it were allowable in other cases, yet in this case done prematurely) I say, these persons, not knowing the world, wish for its pleasures with more ardour than if they had actually experienced them. So, they, who have never been in company with the great, generally imagine that their society is full of charms, that all is pleasure in their company, and that a circle of rich and fashionable people sitting in an elegant apartment is far more lively and animated than one composed of people of inferior rank, and middling fortune. Hence also it is, that they, who, after having lived a dissipated life, have the rare happiness of renouncing it, do so with more sincerity than others, who never knew the vanity of such a life by experience. So very different are the remedies for disorders of the imagination!

But as in complicated disorders, to which we have compared them, a wise physician chiefly attends to the most dangerous complaint, and distributes his remedies so as to counteract those, which are less fatal, we will observe the same method on this occasion. Doubtless the most dangerous way to obtain a contempt for the pleasures of the world, is to get an experimental knowledge of them, in order to detach ourselves more easily from them by the thorough sense we have of their vanity. We hazard a fall by approaching too near, and such very often is the ascendancy of the world over us, that we cannot detatch ourselves from it though we are disgusted with it. Let us endeavour then to preserve our imagination pure; let us abstain from pleasures to preclude the possibility of remembering them; let retirement, and, if it be practicable, perpetual privacy, from the moment we enter into the world to the day we quit it save us from all bad impressions, so that we may never know the effects, which worldly objects would produce in our passions. This method sure and effectual is useless and impracticable, in regard to such as have received bad impressions on their imagination. People of this character ought to pursue the second method we mentioned,

that

that is to profit by their losses, and derive wisdom from their errors. When you recollect sin, you may remember the folly and pain of it. Let the courtier, whose imagination is yet full of the vain glory of a splendid court, remember the intrigues he hath known there, the craft, the injustice, the treachery, the dark and dismal plans that are formed and executed there.

I would advise such a man, when his passions solicit him to sin, to call in the aid of some other idea to strike and affect his imagination. Let him make choice of that out of the truths of religion, which seems most likely to impress his mind, and let him learn the art of instantly opposing impression against impression, and image against image; for example, let him often fix his attention on death, judgement, and hell; let him often say to himself, I must die soon; I must stand before a severe tribunal, and appear in the presence of an impartial judge; let him go down in thought into that gulf, where the wicked expiate in eternal torments their momentary pleasures; let him think he hears the sound of the piercing cries of the victims whom divine justice sacrifices in hell; let him often weigh in his mind the *chains of darkness* that load miserable creatures in hell; let him often approach the fire that consumes them; let him, so to speak, scent the smoke that rises up for ever and ever; let him often think of eternity, and place himself in that awful moment, in which *the angel will lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer*, Rev. x. 5, 6. and let the numerous reflections furnished by all these subjects be kept as corps de reserve, always ready to fly to his aid, when the enemy approaches to attack him.

In fine, to heal the disorders, which the passions produce in the *heart*, two things must be done. First the vanity of all the creatures must be observed; and this will free us from the desire of possessing and collecting the whole in order to fill up the void, which single enjoyments leave. Secondly we must ascend from creatures to the Creator, in order to get rid of the folly of attributing to the world the perfection and sufficiency of God.

Let us first free our hearts from an avidity for new pleasures by comprehending all creatures in our catalogue of vanities. I allow, inconstancy, and love of novelty, are in some sense rational. It is natural for a being exposed to trouble

trouble to choose to change his condition, and as that in which he is yields certain trouble, to try whether another will not be something easier. It is natural to a man, who hath found nothing but imperfect pleasure in former enjoyments, to desire new objects. The most noble souls, the greatest genuises, the largest hearts have often the most inconstancy and love of novelty, because the extent of their capacity and the space of their wishes make them feel, more than other men, the diminutiveness and incompetency of all creatures. But the misfortune is, man cannot change his situation without entering into another almost like that from which he came. Let us persuade ourselves, that there is nothing substantial in creatures, that all conditions, beside characters of vanity common to all human things, have some imperfections peculiar to themselves. If you rise out of obscurity, you will not have the troubles of obscurity, but you will have those of conspicuous stations; you will make talk for every body, you will be exposed to envy, you will be responsible to each individual for your conduct. If you quit solitude, you will not have the troubles of solitude, but you will have those of society; you will live under restraint, you will lose your liberty, inestimable liberty, the greatest treasure of mankind, you will have to bear with the faults of all people connected with you. If heaven gives you a family, you will not have the trouble of such as have none, but you will have others necessarily resulting from domestic connections; you will multiply your miseries by the number of your children, you will fear for their fortune, you will be in pain about their health, and you will tremble for fear of their death. My brethren, I repeat it again, there is nothing substantial in this life. Every condition hath difficulties of its own as well as the common inanity of all human things. If, in some sense, nothing ought to surprize us less than the inconstancy of mankind and their love of novelty, in another view, nothing ought to astonish us more, at least there is nothing more weak and senseless. A man, who thinks to remedy the vanity of earthly things by running from one object to another, is like him, who, in order to determine whether there be in a great heap of stones any one capable of nourishing him, should resolve to taste them all one after another. Let us shorten our labour. Let us put all creatures into one class. Let us cry, vanity in all. If we determine to pursue new objects, let us choose such as are capable

capable of satisfying us. Let us not seek them here below. They are not to be found in this old world, which God hath cursed. They are in the *new heavens*, and the *new earth*, which religion promises. To comprehend all creatures in a catalogue of vanities is an excellent rule to heal the heart of the disorders of passion.

Next we must frequently ascend from creatures to the Creator, and cease to consider them as the supreme good. We intend here a devotion of all times, places and circumstances; for, my brethren, one great source of depravity in the most eminent saints is to restrain the spirit of religion to certain times, places and circumstances. There is an art of glorifying God by exercising religion every where. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 13. Do you enjoy the pleasures of sense? Say to yourself, God is the author of this pleasure. The nourishment I derive from my food is not necessarily produced by aliments, they have no natural power to move my nerves, God hath communicated it to them; there is no necessary connection between the motions of my senses and agreeable sensations in my soul, it is God, who hath established the union between motion and sensation. The particles emitted by this flower could not necessarily move the nerves of my smell, it is God who hath established this law; the motion of my smelling nerves cannot naturally excite a sensation of agreeable odour in my soul, it is God who hath established this union; and so of the rest. God is supreme happiness, the source from which all the charms of creatures proceed. He is the light of the sun, the flavour of food, the fragrance of odours, the harmony of sounds, he is whatever is capable of producing real pleasure, because he eminently possesses all felicity, and because all kinds of felicity flow from him as their spring. Because we love pleasure we ought to love God, from whom pleasure proceeds; because we love pleasure we ought to abstain from it, when God prohibits it, because he is infinitely able to indemnify us for all the sacrifices we make to his orders. To ascend from creatures to the Creator is the last remedy we prescribe for the disorders of the passions. Great duties they are: but they are founded on strong motives.

Of these St. Peter mentions one of singular efficacy, that is, that we are *strangers and pilgrims* upon earth *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* The be-

lievers to whom the apostle wrote this epistle, were *strangers and pilgrims* in three senses—as exiles—as christians—and as mortals.

1. As *exiles*. This epistle is addressed to such strangers as were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. But who were these strangers? Commentators are divided. Some think they were Jews, who had been carried out of their country in divers revolutions under Tiglath Pileser, Salmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, and Ptolemy. Others think, they were the jewish christians, who fled on account of the martyrdom of Stephen. Certain it is these christians were *strangers*, and probably exiles for religion. Now people of this character have special motives to govern their passions.

Strangers are generally very little beloved in the place of their exile. Although rational people treat them with hospitality; though nature inspires some with respect for the wretched of every character; though piety animates some with veneration for people firm in their religious sentiments; yet, it must be allowed, the bulk of the people usually see them with other eyes; they envy them the air they breathe, and the earth they walk on; they consider them as so many usurpers of their rights; and they think, that as much as exiles partake of the benefits of government, and the liberty of trade, so much they retrench from the portion of the natives.

Beside, the people commonly judge of merit by fortune, and as fortune and banishment seldom go together, popular prejudice seldom runs high in favour of exiles. Jealousy views them with a suspicious eye, malice imputes crimes to them, injustice accuses them for public calamities . . . . . we will not enlarge. Let an inviolable fidelity to the state, an unsuspected love to government, an unreserved conformity to religion silence accusation, and compel, so to speak, an esteem that is not natural and free. Moreover, religious exiles have given up a great deal for conscience, and they must choose either to loose the reward of their former labours, or to persevere. A man who hath only taken a few easy steps in religion, if he let loose his passions, may be supposed rational in this, his life is all of a piece. He considers present interest as the supreme good, and he employs himself wholly in advancing his present interest, he lays down a principle, he infers a consequence, and he makes sin produce all possible advantage. An abominable principle certainly,

certainly, but a uniform train of principle and consequence; a fatal advantage in a future state, but a real advantage in the present: but such a *stranger* as we have described, a man banished his country for religion, if he continues to gratify fleshly passions, is a contradictory creature, a sort of idiot, who is at one and the same time a martyr to vice and a martyr to virtue. He hath the fatal secret of rendering both time and eternity wretched, of arming against himself heaven and earth, God and satan, paradise and hell. On the one hand, for the sake of religion he quits every thing dear, and renounces the pleasure of his native soil, the society of his friends, family connections, and every prospect of preferment and fortune; thus he is a martyr for virtue, by this he renders the present life inconvenient, and arms against himself the world, satan, and hell. On the other hand, he stabs the practical part of religion, violates all the sacred laws of austerity, retirement, humility, patience and love, all which religion most earnestly recommends; by so doing he becomes a martyr for sin, renders futurity miserable, and arms against himself God, heaven and eternity. The same God who forbad superstition and idolatry, enjoined all the virtues we have enumerated, and prohibited every opposite vice. If men be determined to be damned, better go the broad than the narrow way. Who but a madman would attempt to go to hell, by encountering the difficulties, that lie in the way to heaven!

2. The believers, to whom Peter wrote, were strangers as *christians*, and therefore strangers because believers. What is the fundamental maxim of the christian religion? Jesus Christ told Pilate, *My kingdom is not of this world*, John xviii. 36. This is the maxim of a christian, the first great leading principle, *his kingdom is not of this world:* his happiness and misery, his elevation and depression depend on nothing in this world.

This first principle is the ground of the apostle's exhortation. The passions destroy this maxim by supposing the world capable of making us happy or miserable. Revenge supposes our honour to depend on the world, on the opinion of those idiots, who have determined that a man of honour ought to revenge an affront. Ambition supposes our elevation to depend on the world, that is, on the dignities which ambitious men idolize. Avarice supposes our riches depend on this world, on gold, silver, and estates.

These are not the ideas of a christian. His honour *is not of this world*, it depends on the ideas of God, who is a just dispenser of glory. His elevation *is not of this world*, it depends on thrones and crowns which God prepares. His riches are *not in this world*, they depend on *treasures in heaven, where thieves do not break through and steal*, Matt. vi. 20. It is allowable for a man educated in these great principles, but whose infirmity prevents his thinking on them; it is indeed allowable for a man, who cannot always bend his mind to reflection, meditation, and elevation above the world; it is indeed allowable for such a man sometimes to unbend his mind, to amuse himself with cultivating a tulip, or embellishing his head with a crown: but that this tulip, that this crown should seriously occupy such a man; that they should take up the principle attention of a christian, who hath such refined ideas and such glorious hopes, this, this is intirely incompatible.

3. In fine, we are *strangers and pilgrims* by necessity of nature as *mortal men*. If this life were eternal, it would be a question, whether it were more advantageous to man to gratify his passions than to subdue them; whether the tranquillity, the equanimity, the calm of a man perfectly free, and entirely master of himself, would not be preferable to the troubles, conflicts and turbulence of a man in bondage to his passions. Passing this question, we will grant, that were this life eternal, prudence and self-love well understood would require some indulgence of passion. In this case there would be an immense distance between the rich and the poor, and riches should be acquired; there would be an immense distance between the high and the low, and elevation should be sought; there would be an immense distance between him who mortified his senses, and him who gratified them, and sensual pleasures would be requisite.

But death, death renders all these things alike; at least, it makes so little difference between the one and the other that it is hardly discernible. The most sensible motive therefore to abate the passions is death. The tomb is the best course of morality. Study avarice in the coffin of a miser; this is the man, who accumulated heap upon heap, riches upon riches, see, a few boards inclose him, and a few square inches of earth contain him. Study ambition in the grave of that enterprizing man; see his noble designs, his extensive projects, his boundless expedients are all shatttered and sunk in this fatal gulf of human projects. Approach the tomb of the proud

proud man, and there investigate pride; see the mouth that pronounceth lofty expressions condemned to eternal silence, the piercing eyes that convulsed the world with fear, covered with a midnight gloom, the formidable arm, that distributed the destinies of mankind, without motion and life. Go to the tomb of the nobleman, and there study quality; behold his magnificient titles, his royal ancestors, his flattering inscriptions, his learned genealogies are all gone, or going to be lost with himself in the same dust. Study voluptuousness at the grave of the voluptuous; see, his senses are destroyed, his organs broken to pieces, his *bones scattered at the grave's mouth*, and the whole temple of sensual pleasure subverted from its foundations.

Here we finish this discourse. There is a great difference between this and other subjects of discussion. When we treat of a point of doctrine, it is sufficient that you hear it, and remember the consequences drawn from it. When we explain a difficult text, it is enough that you understand it, and recollect it. When we press home a particular duty of morality, it is sufficient that you apply it to the particular circumstance to which it belongs.

But what regards the passions is of universal and perpetual use. We always carry the principles of these passions within us, and we should always have assistance at hand to subdue them. Always surrounded with objects of our passions, we should always be guarded against them. We should remember these things, when we see the benefits of fortune, to free ourselves from immoderate attachment to them; before human grandeur to despise it; before sensual objects to subdue them; before our enemy to forgive him; before friends, children, and families to hold ourselves disengaged from them. We should always examine in what part of ourselves the passions hold their throne, whether in the mind, the senses, the imagination, or the heart. We should always examine whether they have depraved the heart, defiled the imagination, perverted the senses, or blinded the mind. We should ever remember, that we are *strangers* upon earth, that to this our condition calls us, our religion invites us, and our nature compels us.

But alas! it is this, it is this general influence, which these exhortations ought to have over our lives, that makes us fear we have addressed them to you in vain. When we treat of a point of doctrine, we may persuade ourselves it hath been understood. When we explain a difficult text, we flatter ourselves

ourselves we have thrown some light upon it. When we urge a moral duty, we hope the next occasion will bring it to your memory: and yet how often have we deceived ourselves on these articles! How often have our hopes been vain! How often have you *sent us empty away*, even though we demanded so little? What will be done to day? Who that knows a little of mankind can flatter himself that a discourse intended, in regard to a great number, to change all, to reform all, to renew all, will be directed to its true design?

But O God! There yet remains one resource, it is thy grace, it is thine aid, *grace* that we have a thousand times *turned into lasciviousness*, and which we have a thousand times rejected: yet after all assisting grace, which we most humbly venture to implore. When we approach the enemy we earnestly beseech thee, *teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight!* When we did attack a town, we fervently besought thee to render it accessible to us! Our prayers entered heaven, our enemies fled before us, *thou didst bring us into the strong city, and didst lead us into Edom*, Psal. lx. 9. The walls of many a Jericho fell at the sound of our trumpets, at the sight of thine ark and the approach of thy priests: but the old man is an enemy far more formidable than the best disciplined armies, and it is harder to conquer the passions than to beat down the walls of a city! O help us to subdue this old man, as thou hast assisted us to evercome other enemies! Enable us to triumph over our passions as thou hast enabled us to succeed in levelling the walls of a city! Stretch out thy holy arm in our favour in this church, as in the field of battle! So be the protector both of the state and the church, crown our efforts with such success that we we may offer the most noble songs of praise to thy glory! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON IX*.

TRANSIENT DEVOTIONS.

HOSEA vi. 4.

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

THE church hath seldom seen happier days than those described in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. God had never diffused his benedictions on a people in a richer abundance. Never had a people gratitude more lively, piety more fervent. The red sea had been passed, Pharoah and his insolent court were buried in the waves, access to the land of promise was opened, Moses had been admitted on the holy mountain to derive felicity from God the source, and sent to distribute it among his countrymen, to these choice favours promises of new and greater blessings yet were added, and God said, *ye have seen what I did unto the Egytians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, although all the earth be mine*, ver. 4, 5. The people were deeply affected with this collection of miracles. Each individual entered into the same views, and seemed animated with the same passion, all hearts were united, and one voice expressed the sense of all the tribes of Israel, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do*, ver. 8. But this devotion had one great defect, it lasted only forty days. In forty days the deliverance out of Egypt, the catastrophe of Pharoah, the passage through the sea, the articles of the covenant; in forty days vows, promises, oaths, all were effaced from the heart and forgotten.

* Preached the first Lord's day of the year 1710. The Lord's supper day.

forgotten. Moses was absent, the lightening did not glitter, the thunder claps did not roar, and the Jews *made a calf in Horeb, worshipped that molten image, and changed their glorious God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass,* Psal. cxi. 19, 20. It was this that drew upon Moses this cutting reproof from God, *Go,* said he to Moses, to that Moses always fervent for the salvation of his people, always ready to plead for them, *go, get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them,* Exod. xxxii. 7, 8. They have *quickly* turned aside, this is the great defect of their devotion, this that which renders all devotion incomplete.

Do you know this portrait, my brethren? Hath this history nothing in it like yours? Are any days more solemn than such as we observe in our present circumstances? Did God ever draw near to us with more favours than he hath this day? Did we ever approach him with more fervour? On the one hand, the beginning of another year recalls to mind the serious and alarming discourses, which the ministers of Jesus Christ addressed to us on the last anniversary, the many strokes given, to whom? To the enemies of God? Alas! To the state and the church! Many cut off in the field of battle, many others carried away in the ordinary and inevitable course of things, many perils in one word, with which we were threatened, but which thy mercy, O God, hath freed us from! On the other hand, this sacred table, these august symbols, these earnests of our eternal felicity, all these objects, do they not render this day one of the most singular in our lives?

If *heaven* hath thus *heard the earth* (we are happy to acknowledge it, my brethren, and we eagerly embrace this opportunity of publishing your praise) the earth hath heard the heaven. To judge by appearance, you have answered our wishes, and exceeded our hopes. You were exhorted to prepare for the Lord's supper, you did prepare for it. You were called to public worship, you came. You were exhorted to attend to the word of God, you did attend to it. You were required to form resolutions of a holy life, you made these resolutions. It seemed, while we saw you come with united ardour this morning to the table of Jesus Christ, it seemed as if we heard you say, with the Israelites of old, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.*

But

But we declare, my brethren, a cloud comes over the bright scene of this solemnity. I fear, shall I say the forty? Alas, I fear the four succeeding days! These doors will be shut, this table will be removed, the voice of the servants of God will cease to sound in your ears, and I fear the Lord will say of you, *they have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them.*

Let us not content ourselves with foreseeing this evil, let us endeavour to prevent it. This is the design of the present discourse in which we will treat of transient devotions. To you, in the name of God, we address the words, the tender words, which will occasion more reflections than they may seem at first to do, but which no reflections can exhaust, *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*

O Almighty God! We humbly beseech thee, enable us in the offerings we make to thee to resemble thee in the favours, which thou bestowest upon us! Thy *gifts* to us are *without repentance*, thy covenant with us contains this clause, *the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee!* O that our offerings to thee may be *without repentance*, O that we may be able to reply, *the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my* fidelity *shall never depart from thee, neither shall* the dedication, which I have made of myself to theee, *ever be removed! I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* Amen.

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? Ephraim, Judah, are terms of the text, that have very little need of explication. You know, that the people of God were united in one state till the time of Jereboam, when he rent a part from Rehoboam the son of Solomon, thus two kingdoms were constituted, that of Judah and that of Israel. Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah, and of Israel Samaria was the metropolis, and it is sometimes called Ephraim in scripture. By *Judah* and *Ephraim* the prophet then means both these kingdoms. This wants no proof, and if there be any thing worth remarking on this occasion, it is that most interpreters, who are often the echoes of one another, describe the ministry of Hosea as directed only to the kingdom of Israel, whereas it is

clear by the text, and by several other passages, that it was addressed both to Israel and Judah.

But of all unlucky conjectures, I question whether there be one more so than that of some divines, who think our text prophetical. In their opinion the *goodness* mentioned in the text is the mercy of God displayed in the gospel. The *dew* signifies Jesus Christ. The *morning, thy goodness is like the morning dew* intends the covenant of grace. As every one proposes his opinion under some appearance of evidence, it is said in favour of this, that the expression, thy *goodness*, does not signify the goodness of the people, but that which is manifested to the people, and in proof of this the idiom of the Hebrew tongue is alleged, with divers passages that justify this tour of expression, as this, *my people are bent to their backsliding*, that is to *backsliding from me. The dew*, say they, signifies the Messiah, for he is promised under that emblem in many passages of scripture. They add further, *the morning* signifies the new dispensation of the gospel, which is often announced under this idea by the prophets, and all this text, *thy goodness is as the early dew which goeth away*, opens a wonderful contrast between the law and the gospel. The law was like a storm of hail destroying the fruits of the earth, but the gospel is a dew that makes every thing fruitful; the law was a dark night, but the gospel is a fine day; *thy goodness is like the morning dew which goeth away*, that is to say, which cometh. Here are many good truths out of place. *Thy goodness* may signify, for any thing we know, goodness exercised towards thee; the Messiah is represented as a *dew:* the gospel œconomy is promised under the emblem of the *morning*, all this is true, but all this is not the sense of the text. The word *goodness*, which is the first mistake of the exposition just now given, may be understood of piety in general. It hath that meaning in many passages of scripture. The substantive derived from it is usually put for pious persons, and according to a celebrated critic, it is from the word *hasidim*, the pious, that the word *essenes* is derived, a name given to the whole sect among the Jews, because they possessed a more eminent piety than others. A *goodness like the morning dew* is a seeming piety *which goeth away*, that is of short duration, and all these words, *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Juduh what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away*, are a reproof from God to his people for the unsteadiness of their devotions. In this light

light we will consider the text, and shew you first the nature —and secondly the unprofitableness of transient devotions.

I. Let us first enquire the *nature* of the piety in question What is this *goodness* or piety, that *is as a morning cloud,* and *goeth away as the early dew?* We do not understand by this piety either those deceitful appearances of hypocrites, who conceal their profane and irreligious hearts under the cover of ardour and religion, or the disposition of those christians, who fall through their own frailty from high degrees of pious zeal, and experience motions of sin after they have felt exercises of grace. The devotion we mean to describe goes further than the first: but it does not go so far as the last.

The transient devotion, of which we speak, is not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy cannot suspend the strokes of divine justice one single moment, and it is more likely to inflame than to extinguish the righteous indignation of God. It is not to hypocrites that God addressed this tender language, *O Ephruim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee?* Their sentence is declared, their punishment is ready. *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. The portion of hypocrites shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,* Matt. xv. 7. xxiii. 13. and xxiv. 51.

Nor is the piety we mean to describe that of the weak and revolting believer How imperfect soever this piety may be, yet it is real. It is certainly a very mortifying consideration to a believer that he should be at any time hemmed in, confined, and clogged in his devotional exercises. In some golden days of his life, forgetting the world, and wholly employed about heavenly things, how happy was he, how delicious his enjoyment, when he surmounted sense and sin, ascended to God like Moses formerly on the holy mount, and there conversed with his heavenly Father concerning religion, salvation, and eternity! O how richly did he then think himself indemnified for the loss of time in worldly pursuits by pouring his complaints into the bosom of God, by opening all his heart, by saying to him with inspired men, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee! It is good for me to draw near to God! My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joy-*

ful lips! I say, it is a very mortifying thing to him, after such elevations in the enjoyment of such magnificent objects, to be obliged through the frailty of his nature to go down again into the world, and to employ himself, about what? A suit of cloaths, a menial servant, a nothing! Above all, it is very mortifying to him, after he hath tasted pleasures so pure, to feel himself disposed to sin! But after all, this piety, though very imperfect, is genuine and true. It should humble us, but it should not destroy us, and we should be animated with a spirit too rigid, were we to confound this piety with that, which *is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away.*

The piety we speak of lies between these two dispositions. As I said before, it doth not go so far in religion as the second, but it doth go beyond the first. It is sincere, in that it is superior to hypocrisy: but it is unfruitful, and in that respect it is inferior to the piety of the weak and revolting christian. It is sufficient to discover sin, but not to correct it; sufficient to produce sincere resolutions, but not to keep them; it softens the heart, but it doth not renew it; it excites grief, but it doth not eradicate evil dispositions. It is a piety of times, opportunities, and circumstances, diversified a thousand ways, the effect of innumerable causes, and to be more particular, it usually owes its origin to public calamities, or to solemn festivals, or to the approach of death: but it expires as soon as the causes are removed.

1. By piety *like the early dew that goeth away*, we mean that, which is usually excited by *public calamities*. When a state prospers, when its commerce flourishes, when its armies are victorious, it acquires weight and consequence in the world. Prosperity is usually productive of crimes. Conscience falls asleep during a tumult of passions, as depravity continues security increases, the patience of God becomes weary, and he punishes either by taking away prosperity, or by threatening to take it away. The terrible messengers of divine justice open their commission. The *winds*, which he makes *his angels*, begin to utter their voices: *flames of fire*, constituted *his ministers*, display their frightful light. Pestilence, war, famine, executioners of the decrees of heaven prepare to discharge their dreadful office. One messenger called *death*, and another called *hell*, receive their bloody commission, *to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, the fourth part of the earth*, Rev. vi. 8. Each individual sees his own doom in the public decree. *Capernaum exalted*

exalted to heaven is going to *be thrust down to hell*, Luke x. 15. Jonahs walk about Nineveh, and make the walls echo with this alarming proclamation, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*, chap iii 4. Or, to lay aside borrowed names, and to make our portrait like the original, your ministers, free from their natural timidity or indolence, despising those petty tyrants, or shall I rather say those diminutive insects, who amidst a free people would have us the only slaves; who while all kinds of vices have free course would have the *word of God bound*, and would reduce the exercise of the reformed ministry to a state more mean and pusillanimous than that of court bishops, or the chaplains of kings; I say your ministers have made you hear their voice, they have gone back to your origin and laid before you the cruel edicts, the sanguinary proscriptions, the barbarous executions, the heaps of mangled carcases, which were, if I may so speak, the first foundations of this republic. From what you were then they have proceeded to what you are now; they have represented to you the end proposed by the Supreme Being in distinguishing you by so many merciful advantages; they have told you, it was to engage you to inform idolatrous nations of the truth, to nourish and favour it in cruel and persecuting countries to support it at home, and so to cast out profaneness, infidelity, and atheism. They have repeatedly urged you to come to a settlement of accounts on these subjects, and they have delivered in against you such an interrogatory as this; are the *hands which hang down, and the feeble knees lifted up?* Doth superstition cover the truth in any places of your government? Is the *affliction of Joseph* neglected? Doth religion insolently lift its head among you, and is it protected by such as are bound to suppress it? They have shewn you the Deity ready to punish an obstinate perseverance in sin, and, if you will forgive the expression, they have preached, illuminated by lighting, and their exhortations have been enforced by thunder. Then every one was struck, all hearts were united, every one ran to the *breach, to turn away the wrath of God, lest he should destroy us all*, Psal. cvi. 23. The magistrate came down from his tribunal, the merchant quitted his commerce, the mechanic laid aside his work, yea, the very libertine suspended his pleasures: vows, prayers, solemn protestations, tears, relenting, promises, sincere promises, nothing was wanting to your devotions. Then the angels rejoiced, a compassionate God smiled, the corn revived,

revived, war was hushed, and was dying away: but along with the first tide of prosperity came rolling back the former depravity, the same indifference to truth, the same negligence of religion, the same infidelity, the same profanity. This is the first kind of that piety, which is *as the early dew that goeth away.* Let us study ourselves in the image of the Jews described in the context. *Come*, say they, when the prophet had predicted the Babylonish captivity to Judah, and the carrying away into Assyria to the ten tribes, *come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two or three days he will revive us, and we shall live in his sight*, ver 12. *After they had rest, they did evil again before thee* (these are the words of Nehemiah) *therefore thou didst leave them in the hand of their enemies. When they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardst them from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them, according to thy mercies. O Ephraim what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away*, chap. ix. 23.

2. In a second class of transient devotions we place that, which *religious solemnities* produce. Providence, always watching for our salvation, hath established in the church not only an ordinary ministry to cultivate our piety, but some extraordinary periods proper to invigorate and bring it to maturity, thus proportioning itself to our frailty. How considerable soever the truths of religion are, it is certain, they lose their importance by our hearing them always proposed in the same circumstances, and the same points of light. There are some days, which put on I know not what of the extraordinary, and put in motion, so to speak, the first great powers of religion. To this our festivals are directed, and this is one of the principal uses of the Lord's supper. Were this ordinance not appointed with this view, as some affirm, had not God annexed some peculiar benediction to it, yet it would be a weak pretence to keep from the Lord's table, and and the use generally granted would always be a sufficient reason to induce those to frequent it, who have their salvation at heart. But, however this may be, it is certain, that such days occasion the sort of devotion we are describing, and usually produce a piety *like the morning cloud, and the early dew that goeth away.*

We

We do not intend here to describe a kind of christians too odious to be put even into this vicious class. For, my brethren, we have a very singular sort of people among us, who though they live in the practice of all wordly licentiousness, will frequent the Lord's table, in spite of all the pains we take to shew their unworthiness, and to keep them away. They will pass through a kind of preparation, and for this purpose they retrench a little portion of time from their course of licentiousness, set out however, with so much accurate calculation that it is easy to see they consider devotion more in the light of a disagreable task than in that of a holy enjoyment. They suspend their habits of sin the whole day before, and all the live long day after the communion. In this interval they receive the Lord's supper, all the while determining to return to their old course of life. What devotion, in which the soul burns with love to worldly pleasure, while it effects to play off the treacherous part of love to religion and God! A devotion that disputes with Jesus Christ a right to three days, gives them up with regret and constraint, and keeps all along murmuring at the genius of a religion, which puts the poor insulted soul on the rack, and forces it to live three whole days without gaming and debauchery! A devotion deep in the plot of Judas to betray the Saviour at his own table! These people need not be characterized. We never administer the Lord's supper without protesting against them; we never say any thing to them, but *Wo, wo be to you;* and though, through a discipline of too much lenity, they escape excommunication, yet never can they escape the anathemas, which God in his word denounces against unworthy communicants.

We mean hear people of another character. It is he, among christians, who doth not live in the practice of all sins, but who doth reserve some, and some of those which, says the gospel, they who commit *shall not inherit the kingdom of God,* 1 Cor. vi. 10. This man doth not with a brutal madness commit such crimes as harden him beyond reflection and remorse, but he hath a sincere desire to a certain degree to correct himself. He takes time enough to prepare himself for the Lord's supper, and then he examines his conscience, meditates on the great truths of religion, the justice of its laws, the holiness of every part, and the rich present, which God bestowed on the church in the person of his own Son. He is affected with these objects, he applies these truths to himself, he promises God to reform: but, a few days after

after the communion, he not only falls into one or two vicious actions, but he gives himself up to a vicious habit, and persists in it till the next communion, when he goes over again the same excesses of devotion, which end again in the same vices, and so his whole life is a continual round of sin and repentance, repentance and sin. This is a second sort of people, whose devotions are transient.

3. But, of all devotions of this kind, that, which needs describing the most, because it comes nearest to true piety, and is most likely to be confounded with it, is that which is excited by the *fear of death*, and which vanishes as soon as the fear subsides.

The most emphatical, the most urgent, and the most pathetical of all preachers is death. What can be said in this pulpit, which death doth not say with tenfold force? What truth can we explain, which death doth not explain with more evidence? Do we treat of the vanity of the world? So does death; but with much more power. The impenetrable veils which it throws over all terrestrial objects, the midnight darkness in which it involves them, the irrevocable orders it gives us to depart, the insurmountable power it employs to tear us away, represent the vanity of the world better than the most pathetical sermons. Do we speak of the horrors of sin? Death treats of this subject more fully and forcibly than we; the pains it brings, the marks it makes upon us while we are dying, the grave to which it turns our eyes as our habitation after death, represent the horror of sin more than the most affecting discourses. Do we speak of the value of divine mercy? Death excels in setting this forth too; hell opening under us, executioners of divine vengeance ranging themselves round our bed, the sharp instruments held over us, represent the mercy of God more fully than the most touching discourses. No sermons like these! When then a sickness supposed to be mortal attacks a man, who hath knowledge and sentiment enough to render him accessible to motives and reflections, but who hath not either respect enough for holiness, or love enough for God thoroughly to attach himself to virtue, then rises this *morning cloud, this early dew that goeth away*.

I appeal to many of you. Recall, each of you, that memorable day of your life, in which sudden fear, dangerous symptoms, exquisite pain, a pale physician, and more than all that an universal faintness and imbecility of your faculties seemed to condemn you to a hasty death. Remember the

prudence

prudence you then had, at least appeared to have, to make your salvation your only care, banishing all company, forbidding your own children to approach, and conversing with your pastor alone. Remember the docility with which, renouncing all reluctance to speak of your own faults, and all desire to hear of those of other people, you respectfully attended to every thing we took the liberty to say, we entered on the mortifying subject, you submitted to the most humbling and circumstantial detail, you yourself filled up the list with articles unknown to us. Recollect the sighs you uttered, the tears you shed, the reproofs you gave yourself, yea the odious names by which you described yourself. Remember the vows, the resolutions, the promises you made. What are become of all these fine projects of conversion and repentance, which should have had an influence over all your life? The degree of your piety was regulated by the degree of your malady. Devotion rose and fell with your pulse. Your zeal kept time with your fever, and as the one decreased the other died away, and the recovery of your health was the resurrection of sin. This man, this praying man, this holy soul, then full of pious ejaculations and meditations, is now brim-full of the world. You are the original of the portrait in the text, and your piety is *as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away.*

II. We have seen the nature, now let us attend to the *insufficiency* of this kind of devotion. Let us endeavour in this second part of our discourse to feel the energy of this reproof, *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away.*

1. On a day like this, in which we have partaken of what is most tender in religion, and in which we ought to yield to the soft feelings, which religion is so fit to excite, let us advert to a singular kind of argument proposed in the text against transient devotions, that is, an argument of *sentiment and love.*

Certainly all the images, which it pleaseth God to use in scripture to make himself known to us, those taken from our infirmities, our passions, our hatred, or our love, all are too imperfect to represent a God, whose elevation above man renders it impossible to describe him by any thing human. However, all these images have a bottom of truth,

a real meaning agreeable to the nature of God, and proportioned to his eminent and infinite excellence.

God represents himself here under the image of a prince, who had formed an intimate connection with one of his subjects. The subject seems deeply sensible of the honour done him. The prince signifies his esteem by a profusion of favours. The subject abuses them. The prince reprehends him. The subject is insensible and hard. To reproofs threatnings are added, and threatnings are succeeded by a suspension of favours. The subject seems moved, affected, changed. The prince receives the penitent with open arms, and crowns his reformation with a double effusion of bountiful donations. The ungrateful subject abuses them again. The prince reproves him again, threatens him again, and again suspends his liberality. To avert the same evil the selfish ingrate makes use of the former method, avails himself of the influence, which the esteem of the prince gives him, and again he obtains forgiveness. The prince loves this violence: but the perfidious subject knowing his goodness returns to his ungrateful behaviour as often as his bountiful Lord yields to his own inclination to mercy and esteem, and thus becomes equally barbarous, whether he seems affected with the benevolence of his prince, or whether he seems to despise it. For, my brethren, it is much less difficult to separate ones self wholly from a faithless friend than to conduct ones self properly to one who is faithless only by fits. These equivocal reformations, these appearances of esteem are much more cruel than total ingratitude, and open avowed hatred. In an intire rupture the mind is presently at a point: but in such imperfect connections as these a thousand opposite thoughts produce a violent conflict in the mind. Shall I countenance ingratitude, shall I discourage repentance? I repeat it again, though this image is infinitely beneath the majesty of God, yet it is that, which he hath thought proper to employ. *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.* O Ephraim, O Judah, why do you rend my heart asunder by turns with your virtue and your vice? Why not allow me either to give myself entirely to you, or to detatch myself entirely from you? Why do you not suffer me to give a free course either to my esteem or to my displeasure? Why do you not allow me to glorify myself by your repentance, or by your

your ruin? Your devotions hold my hand: your crimes inflame my anger. Shall I destroy a people appealing to my clemency? Shall I protect a people trampling upon my laws: *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*

2. Consider secondly the injustice of these devotions. Though they are vain, yet people expect God to reward them. Hear these words, *they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness:* but, *say they, wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge,* Isa. lviii. 2, 3. Though these complaints were unjust, yet, what is very remarkable, God sometimes paid attention to them; for though he sees the bottom of men's hearts, and distinguishes real from apparent piety, yet he hath so much love for repentance, that he sometimes rewards the bare appearance of it. See how he conducts himself in regard to Ahab. Ahab was a wicked king. God denounced judgments against him, and was about to inflict them. Ahab tore his garments, covered himself with sackcloth and ashes, and lay in the dust. What said God to Elijah? *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil,* 1 Kings xxi. 29. Not bring the evil! Why, hath Ahab prohibited idolatry? Hath he restored Naboth's vineyard? Hath he renounced his treaties with the enemies of God? No. Yet *Ahab humbleth himself, and because he humbleth himself I will not bring the evil.* So true it is, that God sometimes rewards a mere shadow of repentance.

The Jews knew this condescension of God, and they insulted it in the most odious manner. *Come let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up;* and when he hath *raised us up*, and re-established us, we will follow our former course of life. When the tempest is over, we will again blaspheme the Creator of storms. Is not this the very top of injustice?

3. There is, let us observe, a manifest *contradiction* between these two periods of life, between that of our devotion and that of our sin. What destroys one, necessarily subverts both, and a reasonable man acting consistently ought to choose, either to have no periods of devotion, or to per-

petuate them. Yes, we should choose, either a real inward piety to influence our practice, or none of the superficial sentiments, that produce a profession of it. We should choose either to act openly like an unmoveable philosopher, or shall I rather say a brute beast, when we seem to be upon the verge of the grave, or that the piety excited then should continue as long as we live in case of recovery. There is a palpable contradiction in having both these dispositions. When the state is in danger, and a solemn fast is kept, what is supposed? That there is a just God governing the universe, dispensing good and evil, sooner or later destroying rebellious nations, and exercising a justice more or less severe according to the duration of his patience. If we believe all this, we should endeavour to regulate the state by these principles, and if we do not believe it, we should not humble ourselves, and fast, and *bow down our heads like a bulrush.* What is supposed by the prayers, and tears, and protestations we bring to the table of Jesus Christ? That God loves us, that he hath so loved us as to give us his Son, that a christian ought to return Jesus Christ love for love, and life for life. If we believe this, we ought to be always faithful to God, and if we do not believe it, we ought not to communicate, to pray, to weep, to promise. What is supposed by all the appearance of devotion we have in sickness? That the soul is immortal, that there is a future state, that an eternity of happiness or misery awaits us. If we believe this, we ought to regulate our actions by these truths, and if we do not believe it, if the soul be not immortal, if heaven and hell be phantoms, we ought not to put on an appearance of religion in prospect of death. But such is our littleness, when we lose sight of a thing, we think it ceases to be. When we find the art of forgetting truth, it should seem truth is no no more. When we cease thinking of our judge, it seems to us, there is no judge. We resemble children, who shut their eyes to hide themselves from the sight of their nurses.

4. Every part of devotion supposes some *action* of life, so that if there be no such action the whole value of devotion ceases. We hear a sermon, in this sermon we are taught some truth of religion, which hath a close and inseparable connection with our moral conduct. We are told that a judge must be upright, a friend disinterested, a depositary faithful. We do well to be attentive to this sermon: but after we have heard it, we violate all the rules, if we be corrupt judges, ungrateful friends, faithless depositaries, and if

because

because we have heard our duty we think ourselves discharged from the necessity of doing it, do we not prevent the order and destination of this discourse? We receive the Lord's supper, there we go to confirm our faith, to detach ourselves from the world, to prepare ourselves for a future state. We do well to receive the Lord's supper: but if after we have received it we become lax in believing, fastened to the world, and without thought of a future state, and if we neglect these duties under pretence that we took steps relative to these duties, do we not pervert the Lord's supper? This reasoning is so clear, that it seems needless to pretend to elucidate it. Yet many people reason in this manner, I have been to a place of worship, I have heard a sermon, I have received the communion, and now I may give a loose to my passions: but it is because you have been to a place of worship, it is because you have heard a sermon and received the communion, it is on account of this, that you ought wholly to employ yourself about that work, to promote which all these devotions were appointed.

5. Transient devotions are *inconsistent with the general design of religion.* This design is to reform man, to renew him, to transform him into the likeness of glorified saints, to render him like God. But how does a rapid torrent of devotion attended with no moral rectitude contribute to this end? If while I fast I eradicate the world from my heart, if while I acknowledge the enormity of my past life I endeavour to reform it, if while I give mortal blows to the old man I form the new man in my heart, and if I thus build the edifice of grace, where once the temple of depravity stood, then I erect a fast day toward the great end of religion. But what saith God of another kind of fasting? *Is it such a fast that I have chosen, that a man should afflict his soul for a day? Is it to bow down the head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?* Isa. lviii. 5. And what saith God of exterior devotions in general? *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of burnt-offerings and incense. Your new moons I cannot away with. Who hath required this at your hand?* chap. i. 11. The answer seems ready. Didst not thou, Lord, establish this worship, order an elegant temple to be built, and command the Jews to go up to Jerusalem? Sabbaths, solemn assemblies, new moons, do they not owe their origin to thee? No; when they are destitute

of

of love and obedience *I hate new moons and sabbaths, and solemn assemblies I cannot away with.* In like manner, of all devotions of every kind, when they are not attended with uniform moral obedience, we say, and in particular of the Lord's supper we say, *I am weary* of your preparations, *I hate* your sighs, your tears are an *abomination* to me, *I am full of* momentary devotions, and your pretended holy resolutions *I cannot away with. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*

6. Transient devotions must *render promises of grace* to you *doubtful*, even suppose you should ever, after a thousand revolutions of transient piety, be in possession of true and real religion. What think you of this question? A man, who hath spent his life in sin, is taken extremely ill. His illness, a review of his life, and a fear of death rouse his conscience. He sends for a minister, he opens to him all his heart, he confesses his sins, he weeps, he groans, he protests ten thousand times that he hates his past life, and that he is determined to reform. He persuades himself, and all about him, that he is really converted. The minister promises him peace, and displays before him all the comfortable declarations, which it hath pleased God to bestow in the gospel. The sick man recovers his health, returns to the world, forgets all his designs of conversion and repentance, and pursues his former course of intrigue, and passion, and arrogance. He falls sick a second time, sends a second time for his minister, and again he opens his heart, accuses himself, sheds floods of tears, and once more vows amendment and conversion. The minister on the same principle as before encourages him to hope again. He recovers again, and perjures himself again, as he did the first time. A third time his illness returns, and he takes the same steps, and would embrace the same promises, if they could be addressed to him. Now we ask, how a minister ought to conduct himself to such a man? What think you of this question? You know our commission, it is to preach peace to such as return to God with sincerity and good faith. The marks of sincerity and good faith are good works, and where circumstances render good works impossible, protestations and promises are to be admitted as evidences of sincerity and good faith. These evidences have been deceitful in the man we speak of. His transition from promising to violating was as quick as that from

from violating to promising. Have we any right to suppose the penitent knows his heart better this third time than he did the first and the second? How should we be able to determine his state, how can we address to him any other than doubtful promises, since God, in some sort, adopts such sentiments in the text? *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud that goeth away.*

7. Consider finally the *imprudence* of a man, who divides his life in this manner into periods of devotion and periods of sin. It seems at first to be the heighth of wisdom to find the unheard of art of uniting the reward of virtue with the pleasure of vice. On the one side, by devoting only a few moments to religion he spares himself the pains, which they experience who make conscience of giving themselves intirely up to it; and by suspending only for a little while the exercise of his passions, he enjoys the pleasure of hoping fully to gratify them. On the other side, he quiets the storms of divine justice that threatens his rebellion, and thus obtains by devotions of a moment a protection, which others devote a whole life to acquire. Let us undeceive ourselves. A heart divided in this manner cannot be happy. The chief cause of the difficulties we meet with in the way of salvation is owing to our partial walking, and to the fluctuation of the soul between religion and the world. The world combats religion, religion combats the world. The divided heart is the field of battle where this violent combat is fought. To desire to enjoy the pleasures of both virtue and sin is to enjoy neither, and to partake of the inconveniences, of both. To be at a point, to take a part, and to take the wise part, is the source of true peace and solid felicity.

Beside, this state of suspension, which God assumes in the text is violent, and cannot last long. Like motives of patience do not concur at all times: witness the kingdom of Judah, mentioned in the text, which was at length given up to the fury of the Chaldeans; witness this Ephraim, I mean the kingdom of the ten tribes, concerning whose destiny the prophet seems in the text to waver; however, at length God determined their dispersion, and the tribes were confounded with those idolatrous and wicked people, whose immorality and idolatry they had too exactly copied. All the help of history, and all the penetration of historians are necessary now to discover any trace of these people; if indeed the

the penetration of historians and travellers have discovered any thing about them.

But why go back to remote periods of the world to prove a truth, which our own eyes now behold in abundance of bloody demonstrations? If there ever were a year from the foundation of the world, if there have ever been a year proper to prove these terrible truths, it is that which lately came to an end. The dreadful events that distinguished it, and of which we were, if not the victims, at least the witnesses, are too recent and too well known to need description. This year will be proposed to the most distant posterity as one of the most alarming periods of divine vengeance. Future preachers will quote it as St. Jude formerly did the subversion of Sodom, and the universal deluge. They will tell your posterity, that in the year one thousand seven hundred and nine the patience of God weary with Europe enveloped in one general sentence friend and foe, almost the whole of that beautiful part of the world. They will say, that all the scourges of heaven in concert were let loose to destroy guilty nations. They will lead their auditors over the vast kingdoms of the north, and shew them the Borysthenes stained with blood, contagion flying rapidly, as on the wings of the winds, from city to city, from province to province, from kingdom to kingdom, ravaging in one week so many thousand persons, in the next so many thousand more. They will tell them of the kingdoms, which were claimed by two princes, and by lively images of the cruel barbarities practised there, they will render it doubtful whether it were a desire of conquering or depopulating these kingdoms, that directed the arms of these rivals. They will represent that theatre of blood in Flanders*, and describe in glowing colours troops on both sides animated with equal fury, some to defend posts, which seemed to need no defence but themselves, others to force intrenchments, which nature and art seemed to have rendered impregnable. They will describe both armies animated with a fury unknown before, disputing in carnage and blood with efforts unparallelled both for the greatness of the slaughter

* Our author refers to the battle of Malplacquet fought September the 11th, 1709, between the French army consisting of one hundred and twenty thousand men commanded by Marshal Villars, and the confederate army consisting of nearly an equal number under the command of the Duke of Marlborough. The confederate army obtained the victory at the price of twenty thousand of their best troops.

slaughter, and the glory of the victory. They will represent the most fruitful kingdom of Europe under all the misery of scarcity, in this more cruel than famine, it inflicts a more slow and lingering death. They will speak of the labourers howling for bread in the public roads; and will tell of "a sudden ferocity next to madness possessing multitudes, men seizing public convoys, snatching the bread from one anothers hands, decency, fidelity and religion being dead*."

So many victims sacrificed to divine vengeance, my brethren, so many plagues wasting Europe, so many shocks of the earth, above all, as great a share as our crimes had in kindling the anger of God, should seem to shake the foundations of this state, and to convulse and kill the greatest part of this auditory. Yet, this state still subsists, thanks to thine infinite mercy my God, the state yet subsists, and, though afflicted, distressed, and weary with a long and cruel war, it subsists as rich and as splendid as any country in the world. These hearers, too, yet subsist, thanks to thy mercy my God, our eyes behold them, and by a kind of miracle they have been preserved to the beginning of another year. Preserved, did I say? They have been crowned. And how doth this year begin, this year which we never expected to see, after a year distinguished by the three great evils, pestilence, famine, and war, how doth it begin with us? It begins with the smiles of heaven, with a participation of what is most august in religion, with the descent of the holy Spirit into our hearts, with the renewing of our covenant with God, and, if I may be allowed to say so, it begins with an acknowledgment on God's part, that his love will not allow of our destruction, how much soever we deserve to be destroyed. *O Ephraim, how shall I give thee up? O Israel, how shall I deliver thee up? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* Ah! Why must a joy so pure be mixed with a just fear, that you will abuse his goodness? Why, across such a multitude of benefits, must we be constrained to look at vengeance behind? O republic! nourished by heaven, *upon which the eyes of the Lord thy God are always* fixed, *from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year*, Deut. xi. 12. why must we be driven to day

* Flechier's pastoral letter.

to utter unpleasant omens along with the most affectionate benedictions? And you believers, who hear us, why, now that we wish you a happy new year, must we be obliged to foretel an unhappy one?

For what security have we, that this year will be more holy than the last? have we any certainty that this communion will be more effectual than others? What security have we, that the resolutions of this day will have more influence over our lives than all before? Can we be sure, that the devotion of this day will not be *as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away?* And consequently, what security have we, that this will not be the last year of this republic, the last communion, the last invitation of mercy, that will ever be given to all this assembly?

Ah, my brethren, my dear brethren, behold the God, who *heweth us by his prophets*, behold him, who hath *slain* men *by the words of his mouth*, behold him, who in the presence of his angels waiting in this assembly, behold him once more saying to you, *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, that goeth away!*

There are two great motives, among many others, which chiefly urge your conversion to day; your receiving the Lord's supper this morning, and the uncertainty of living all this year.

This morning you received the Lord's supper, and with it peace of conscience, inward consolation, ineffable pleasure, *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, if indeed you did feel this, and if these are not in regard to you sounds without meaning. What! Shall four days, shall four days efface all these impressions? What! Shall a worldly society, will a sensual temptation, can a profane raillery bring you to violate all your resolutions, and to be guilty of perjury towards God? Do not fall into the puerility mentioned a little while ago, do not think the great truths you have felt to day will cease to be, because you cease to think of them. Jesus died for you, Jesus gave himself for you, Jesus demands your heart, Jesus promises you an eternity of happiness; this is true to day, this will be true to morrow, and all next week, during all your temptations and pleasures: and what, pray, can the world offer you in lieu of the heaven that came into your conscience, what to supply the place of that Redeemer, who this morning gave himself to you in a manner so affectionate?

To

To this first motive add the other, the vanity of life, a vanity described by the renewing of the year. I am aware, how feeble this motive is to many of us. The past insures us for the future, and because we have never died, it seems to us as if we never should die.

My brethern, you compel us to day to set before you the most mournful images, which can possibly strike your eyes. You oblige us to open wounds beginning to heal, and to anticipate the sorrows of the present year: but what can be done? If we cannot detach men from the world, we must tear them away by force.

Did we deceive you last year, when we told you, that many, who were present in this place on new year's day, would not live through the year? Hath not the event fully verified the sad prediction? Answer me, ye disconsolate widows, who saw your husbands, objects of the purest and tenderest love, expire in your arms. Answer me, ye children in mourning, who followed your parents to the grave. How many afflicted Jacobs are weeping for the loss of a mother? How many Davids are saying in the bitterness of their heart; *O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son. Would God I had died for thee!* How many *Benonis, sons of sorrow*, born at the *departing of the soul* of their parents? How many Marthas and Marys, bedewing the grave of a brother with their tears, a brother dead four days, and by this time infectious? How many plaintive voices are heard in Rama? How many Rachels weeping, and refusing to be comforted, because their *children are not?*

Having considered the last year, turn your attention to this, which we are now beginning. If, instead of such vague discourses as we address to you, God should this moment give us light into futurity, a sight of his book of decrees, a foreknowledge of the destiny of all our hearers, and impel us to inform each of you how this new revolution would interest you, what cries would be heard in this auditory! There, you would see that haughty man full blown with vanity confounded in the same dust with the meanest of mankind. Here, you would see this voluptuous woman, who refuses nothing to her senses, lying on a sick bed, expiring in agony between the pain of a mortal malady, and the just fear of falling into the hands of an angry God. Yonder, you would behold that officer, now crowned with laurels, and about to reap a new harvest of glory in the next campaign, covered with tragical dust, weltering in his own blood, and finding

a grave where his imagination appointed victory to meet him. In all parts of this auditory, on the right hand, on the left, before, behind, by your side, in your own pew, I should shew you carcases, and probably he, who hears us with the most indifference, and who secretly despises such as tremble at our preaching, would himself serve to prove the truth we are delivering, and occupy the first place in this fatal list.

My brethren, providence hath not honoured us with any new revelations, we have not a spirit of prophecy: but you have eyes, you have a memory, you have reason, and you are certain death will sacrifice many of you in the course of this year. On whom will the tempest fall? Who will first verify our prediction? You cannot tell: and on this ground you brave death; on this you build castles of vanity which attach you to the world.

My breteren, establish your tranquillity and happiness on foundations more firm and solid. If you be affected with the motives set before you this day, and now resolve to labour in the work of your salvation, only you fear the weakness of your resolutions, we will give you one more lesson, easy and practicable, that is, that every day of this year you retire one quarter of an hour, and think of death. There put on, in thought, your shroud, lie down in your coffin, light your funeral tapers. There, observe your family weeping, your physician aghast, your long and melancholy train. There consider your friends, your children, your titles, your treasures removed for ever. There, strike your imagination with the salutary ideas of books opened, thrones prepared, actions weighed in just balances. There, lose yourself in the dark œconomy of a future state.

Having heard our exhortations, receive our benedictions. First I turn myself toward the walls of that palace, where laws of equity, the glory and felicity of these provinces, are made; where the important questions which influence religion and the state, and shake all Europe, are agitated. Ye protectors of the church, our masters and sovereigns, may God confirm the power, that you possess with so much glory! May God continue in your hands the reins of this republic, which you hold with so much moderation and wisdom! God grant, you may first share the prosperity and glory, which you diffuse among all this people! Under your administration God grant religion may flourish, justice and peace flow over the whole world, the Belgic name be respected and the nation victorious, and after you have been

elevated

elevated to the pinnacle of terrestrial grandeur, may God elevate you to everlasting glory!

I turn myself also to you, illustrious personages, who represent in these provinces the chief heads of the christian world, and who in a manner exhibit in this assembly princes, electors, republics, and monarchs, may God open his richest treasures in favour of those sacred persons, who are Gods upon earth, and whose august characters you bear, to enable them to support sovereign power with dignity! God grant, they may always have such ministers as you, who understand how to make supreme authority both respected and feared! God grant, a confederacy formed for the security of all nations and people may be continued! And, that my wishes may be more worthy of the majesty of this place, and the holiness of my ministry, I pray God to unite you not only by the same temporal interest, but by the same religion; may you have the same God for your Father, the same Jesus for your Redeemer, the same Spirit for your guide, the same glory for your hope! I own, at the sight of these lords of the universe, to whom I have the honour to address myself, I feel my insignificance, and I had suppressed all these wishes in my heart, had I not known that I speak the sense of all this assembly, the benedictions of all the church, and the congratulations of the state.

You also we bless, Levites holy to the Lord, ambassadors of the King of kings, ministers of the new covenant, who have written on your foreheads *holiness to the Lord*, and on your breasts *the names of the children of Israel:* and you, elders and deacons of this church, who are as it were associated with us in the work of the ministry, may God animate you with the zeal of his house! God grant, you may always take for your model the *chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls!* God grant, *after* you have *preached to others*, you may not be *cast away!* May you *turn many to righteousness, and* afterward *shine as the stars for ever and ever!*

Receive our benediction, fathers and mothers of families, happy to see yourselves born again in the persons of your children, happier still to bring those into the *assembly of the first born*, whom you have brought into this valley of trouble! God grant, your houses may be sanctuaries, and your children offerings to the *Father of spirits*, the *God of the spirits of all flesh!*

Accept our good wishes, Officers, and Soldiers, you who after so many battles are going to war again, you who after escaping

escaping so many dangers are entering upon a new march of perils: May the God of battle fight incessantly for you? May victory constantly follow your steps! While you subdue your enemies, may you experience this maxim of the wise man, *he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city.*

Young people receive our blessing: may you ever be preserved from the contagion of the world you are entering! May you devote the inestimable days you enjoy to your salvation! Now may you *remember your Creator in the days of your youth!*

Receive our good wishes, old people, who have already one foot in the grave, let us rather say, who have already *your heart* in heaven *where your treasure is:* May you find your *inward man renewed day by day, as your outward man perisheth!* May you feel your souls strengthened as your bodies decay, and when your house of clay falls, may the gates of heaven open to you!

Desolate countries, to you also we extend our good wishes and prayers. You have been many years the unhappy theatre of the most bloody war that ever was. May the *sword of the Lord, drunk with blood,* retire into its *scabbard, rest and be still!* May the destroying angel, who ravages your fields, cease to execute his commission! May your *swords be beaten into plough shares, and your spears into pruning hooks,* and may the dew of heaven succeed the shower of blood that for so many years has been fallen upon you.

Are our benedictions exhausted? Alas! on this joyful day can we forget our griefs? Ye happy inhabitants of these provinces, so often troubled with a recital of our afflictions, we rejoice in your prosperity, will you refuse to compassionate our misfortunes? And you, *fire brands plucked out of the burning,* sad and venerable ruins of our unhappy churches, my dear brethren, whom the misfortunes of the times have cast on this shore, can we forget the miserable remnants of ourselves? O ye groaning captives, ye weeping priests, ye sighing virgins, ye festivals profaned, ye ways of Zion mourning, ye untrodden paths, ye sad complaints, move, O move all this assembly. *O Jerusalem, if I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning. Not remember thee! let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy! O Jerusalem, peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sake, I will*

now

now say, peace be within thee! May God be moved, if not with the ardour of our prayers, yet with the excess of our afflictions, if not with our misfortunes, yet with the desolation of his sanctuaries, if not with the bodies we carry all about the world, yet with the souls that are torn from us!

And thou, dreadful prince, whom I once honoured as my king, and whom I yet respect as a scourge in the hand of almighty God, thou also shalt have a part in my good wishes. These provinces, which thou threatenest, but which the arm of the Lord protects; this country, which thou fillest with refugees, but fugitives animated with love; these walls, which contain a thousand martyrs of thy making, but whom religion renders victorious, all these yet resound benedictions in thy favour. God grant, the fatal bandage that hides the truth from thine eyes may fall off! May God forget the rivers of blood, with which thou hast deluged the earth, and which thy rain hath caused to be shed! May God blot out of his book the injuries, which thou hast done us, and, while he rewards the sufferers, may he pardon those who exposed us to suffer! O may God, who hath made thee to us, and to the whole church, a minister of his judgments, make thee a dispenser of his favours, an administrator of his mercy!

I return to you, my brethren, I include you all in my benedictions. May God pour out his holy Spirit upon all this assembly! God grant, this year may be to us all an acceptable year, a preparation for eternity! *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, let the skies pour down righteousness, let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation!*

It is not enough to wish for these blessings, they must be procured, and we must derive them from the source. It is not sufficient that a frail man utters benedictions in your favour, we must *pray* for a ratification of them by the *happy God.* We must go to the throne of God himself, wrestle with him, earnestly beseech him with prayers and tears, and *not let him go, except he bless us.* Magistrates, people, soldiers, citizens, pastors, flock, come let us bow our knees before the Monarch of the world: and you *birds of prey*, devouring cares, worldly anxieties, be gone, and interrupt not our sacrifice.

SERMON

SERMON X.

THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF PREACHERS.

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

Other foundation can no man lay than that, which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so, as by fire.

HAD rules of preaching sermons no connection with those of hearing them, we would not have treated of this text in this place. Satisfied with meditating on it in the study, we would have chosen a subject, in which you would have been more directly interested. But what doctrine can we preach to you, which doth not engage you to some dispositions, that cannot be neglected without hazarding the great salvation, for the sake of which you assemble in this holy place? Are we such enemies to truth, or do we so ill understand it, as to teach you a doctrine contrary to that, which the holy Spirit hath laid down in scripture? If so, you should remember the saying of an apostle, and, animated with a holy indignation, should exclaim, *Though you, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto us than that, which we have received, let him be accursed!* Gal. i. 8, 9. Do we always keep in sight, while we are working in the building of the church, *the pattern shewed to us in the mount*, Heb. viii. 5. you ought to be attentive, diligent and teachable. Do we make an

odious mixture of truth and error, *Christ and Belial; light and darkness:* you ought, to *exercise your senses to discern good* from evil. It is this inseparable connection of your duty with ours, which determined me to explain the text. It directly regards the various methods of the preachers of the gospel: but as the terms are metaphorical and obscure, it will be necessary to develop the meaning of the apostle in the following manner.

First we will examine what gave occasion for the words—next we will observe the design of the apostle in writing them—in the third place we will explain the several figures made use of—and lastly we will apply the subject to practice.

I. The *occasion* of the text will appear by a little attention to the connection in which it stands. St. Paul had been endeavouring to put an end to the divisions of the church at Corinth, and to destroy the party spirit of the Corinthians. Ought we to be astonished, that churches are so little unanimous now, when we see the diversity often among apostles and primitive christians? If peace, left by Jesus Christ as an inheritance to his apostles, could not be maintained in churches gathered by these blessed men, where must we look for it? Perhaps, division was partly owing to the imprudence of some preachers in their primitive churches: but certainly their hearers had a chief hand in fomenting them. The teachers had different gifts, and their hearers divided into parties under their ministry. It is always allowable to distinguish men, who have received great talents from God, from such as have received abilities not so great; but these Corinthian christians affected to exalt those of their ministers, who, they thought, were men of the most eminent abilities, to the depression and discouragement of the rest, and under pretence of paying homage to God the giver of these talents, they very indiscreetly idolized the men who had received them. Moreover, they made as many different religions, as God had given different commissions, and different abilities to ministers to execute them. Each party at Corinth chose out of these pretended religions that, which appeared most conformable to its prejudices. The converted pagans were for St. Paul, to whom the conversion of the Gentiles had been committed, and who brought them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and they said, for our parts, *we are of Paul.* Such as had a taste for eloquence were for Apollos,

Apollos, who was *an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures*, and they said, *we are of Apollos.* The converted Jews were for Peter, who discovered a great deal of moderation toward their ceremonies, and who had even *compelled the Gentiles to live as the Jews did*, that is to mix the simple worship of the new testament with the ceremonial observances of the law, and they said, as for us, *we are of Cephas.* And those Jews, who obstinately continued the ceremony of circumcision, pretended that they had no need of the authority either of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, for the example of Jesus Christ, who had himself been circumcised, was sufficient for them, and for their parts, they were *of Christ*

St. Paul tells these Corinthians, that, as long as they should continue in this disposition, he should consider them as novices in the christian religion, able at most only to understand the first principles, not to comprehend the whole design. He tells them, that there were in this religion *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, but into which men could never enter, who mixed their passions with truths intended to mortify them; and that this defect in them prevented him from attempting to lay before them these riches. *I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men*, 1 Cor. iii. 1—3. that is, as men of the world?

Having reproved the folly, and repeated the descriptive censure, he leads them to the true motive, that should induce them to avoid it. Although, as if he had said, the talents of your ministers are not all equal, yet they all received them from the same source, that is, from the grace of God; and how amply soever any of them may be endowed with abilities, they can have no success, except the same grace bestows it. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man*, ver. 5. that is, as the blessing of God accompanied their ministry? *I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase*, ver. 8. A great lesson for those, to whom God hath given gifts to preach the gospel!

A fine example of humility, which they ought always to have before their eyes! And what were the gifts, with which God enriched the first heralds of the gospel? What is a little vivacity of imagination, a little grace of elocution, a little reading, a little justness of reasoning? What are these talents in comparison with the gifts of men, who spoke several foreign languages, who understood all mysteries, who altered the laws of nature, who were dispensers of the divine power, who raised the dead, who *slew the wicked with the breath of their lips*, who struck dead at their feet Ananias and Sapphira, and, to say more still, who were immediately conducted by the Spirit of God in their ministry? Yet behold the man, who was first in this class of extraordinary men, behold this *chosen vessel*, behold the man, who could say, *I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles*, 2 Cor. xi. 5. behold him, doing homage for all his own talents, and all those of his colleagues to that grace, from which they came, and which blessed the administration of them. *Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? He that planteth is nothing, he that watereth is nothing, but God that giveth the increase.*

II. It was to be feared (we proceed to the *design* of the text) it was to be feared, that under pretence that all the ministers of the gospel were united in one point of equality; under pretence that none of them were any more than servants of God, and canals by which he communicated himself to the church; I say it was hazardous, and much to be suspected, whether teachers themselves would not abuse this equality by applying what the apostle meant only of the abilities of preachers to the very doctrines themselves, which they taught,

If this were doubtful in regard to the preachers, it was no less so in regard to the hearers. People have, I think, a natural biass to superstition. They easily shew that respect, which is due only to the character of a minister of the living God, to all that put it on, even to such as use it only for the perverting of the gospel, yea to those who endeavour to subvert it entirely. Because we ought not to hear the gospel in a spirit of chicanery and sophistry, it is supposed we ought to lay aside a spirit of discernment. Hence this way of speaking, so superstitious, and at the same time so common among us, that is, that whatever difference there may be in preachers, yet they all preach the word of God. But

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is it not impossible, that from a text, which is the word of God, explications may be given, which are only the word of man. Not impossible, did I say! I believe it seldom, if ever happens, that two ministers treat of one subject without at least one of them mixing with the word of God some expressions which are only the word of man. Why? Because the conformity of their sentiments can never be so perfect, but they will differ on some questions. Now, of two men, one of whom takes the affirmative side of a question, and the other the negative, one of them must of necessity, in this respect, preach the word of God, and the other the word of man. You should not, therefore, pay a superstitious attention to our discourses. You should not, under pretence that all your ministers thus preach the word of God, confound the word of God with the word of man. Whatever patience you may be obliged to have with our imperfections, you ought not equally to esteem two discourses, the greatest part of one of which you call, and have reason to call, the word of God, and the greatest part of the other the word of man.

The design of St. Paul in our text is to rectify our judgment on this subject. For this purpose he divides preachers into three classes. The first are such as preach the word of man, not only different from the word of God, but directly in opposition to it. The second preach the pure word of God without human mixtures. The third do indeed make the word of God the ground of their preaching, but mix with it the explications and traditions of men. The apostle characterizes these three kinds of preachers, informs us of their destination, and what account God will require of their ministry.

1. *Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.* This is directed against such ministers as preach the word of man in direct opposition to the word of God, or the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ. What will be the destination of such ministers? St. Paul tells us by affirming, *no man can* preach, *no man can lay any other foundation than that which is laid. No man can!* not that this can never happen. Alas! This hath too often happened; witness many communities, which under the christian name subvert all the foundations of the christian religion. But *no man can* do so without rendering himself guilty of the greatest crime and exposing himself to the greatest punishment.

2. *If*

2. *If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones.* These are ministers, who preach the pure word of God, They not only retain all the fundamental points of the christian religion, in opposition to the former who subvert them: but they explain these truth so as to affirm nothing inconsistent with them. All the inferences they draw from these great principles naturally proceed from them, and their whole doctrine is agreeable to the foundation on which it is built. On this account it is compared to *gold, silver*, and *precious stones*. What shall be the destiny of these ministers in the great day of judgment, when their doctrine shall be examined? They *shall receive a reward*. They shall share the glorious promises made to faithful ministers of religion.

3. *If any man build upon this foundation, wood, hay, stubble.* These are ministers, who really make the word of God the ground of their preaching: but who mix the word of man with it, and disfigure it with their fanciful sophistry. When the doctrine of these ministers shall be examined in the great day of judgment what shall their destiny be? *They, themselves shall be saved*, because they have taught nothing directly contrary to the essential truths of christianity: but they shall have no reward for exercising a ministry, in which they rendered the word of God of less effect by mixing with it the traditions of men, and they shall be *saved, yet so, as by fire*, that is with difficulty, because their preaching occupied the time and attention of their hearers in a manner unworthy the disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is, my brethren, a general view of the design of our text: but this is not sufficient to give an exact knowledge of it. In a discourse intended to prevent, or to eradicate a certain kind of superstition, nothing ought to be proposed that is likely to cherish it. You should not be required to believe any thing without the most full and convincing evidence. Having therefore shewn you the general design of the text, we will proceed to our third article, and explain the several metaphors made use of in it.

III. Although all these *figurative expressions* are selected with caution, and very bold, yet they are not all alike obscure to you. Which of you is such a novice, I do not say only in the style of the inspired authors, as not to know the idea affixed to the term *foundation?* In architecture they call those

those massy stones laid in the earth, and on which the whole building rests, foundations: and thus in moral things, particularly in sciences, foundations signify some propositions, without which all the rest, that make the body, cannot subsist.

The foundation laid is Jesus Christ. These terms are to be understood in this place, as in many others, of the *christian religion*, which is called Jesus Christ, not merely because Jesus Christ taught it to the world, but because his history, that is, his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection, is the principal subject. In this sense the apostle says, he *determined not to know any thing among* the Corinthians *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, that is, the christian religion, of which the crucifixion of Christ is a principal article.

The other emblems, *wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones* seem evidently to convey the ideas, which we just now affixed to them. As St. Paul here represents the doctrine of preachers under the similitude of an edifice, it is natural to suppose, that *wood, hay*, and *stubble*, especially when they are opposed to *gold, silver, and precious stones*, should mean doctrines less considerable, either because they are uncertain, or unimportant.

For the same reason, *gold, silver, precious stones*, signify in the edifice of the church, or in the system of preachers, such doctrines as are excellent, sublime, demonstrable. In this sense the prophet Isaiah, describing the glory of the church under the government of the Messiah, says, *behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones*, chap. liv. 11, 12. and by way of explaining this metaphorical language, he adds in the very next words, *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.*

There is a little more difficulty, at least there are many more opinions on the meaning of these words, *Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.* Without detailing, and refuting erroneous opinions on these words, let it suffice that we point out the true sense. By the *day* we understand the final judgment. This day is called in many passages of scripture the day *of the Lord*, the *day*, or *that* day by excellence. Thus the apostle, *Jesus Christ shall confirm you unto the end,*

end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord, chap. i. 8. Thus also, speaking of the temporal punishment of the incestuous person, he says, *deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, chap. v. 5. So again, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i 12. In that day *every man's work shall be revealed*, or *made manifest by fire*. It is not astonishing, that fire should be joined here with the day of judgment. The scripture teacheth us in more than one place, that the terrible day of judgment will verify in the most dreadful of all senses this declaration, *God maketh winds his angels*, and *flaming fire his ministers**. Hence the psalmist says, *the mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. A fire shall devour before him*, Psal. l. 1. Agreeably to which our Apostle says, *the Lord Jesus, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God*, 2 Thess. vii. 10. 8. Though all these passages cast light on the text, yet strictly speaking, I think the apostle presents the fire

* Psalm civ. 4. The English version is—*Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire.* Mr. Saurin understands the words, as above, expressive of the divine influence over the power of nature, and reads, *who maketh winds and fires*, literally, *his instruments*, or figuratively, his *messengers*. This is perfectly agreeable—first to the *original* terms—secondly to the *context*, who walketh upon the wings of the *wind*---who maketh *clouds* his chariot---who sitteth on *waters*---whose canopy is the *heavens*---whose clothing is *light*. This whole psalm, the most sublime of all essays on nature, makes all parts of the universe particles of one body of majestic size, and exact symmetry, of which the psalmist's God, JEHOVAH, is the soul; the *earth*, the *deeps*, *mountains*, *valleys*, *beasts*, *fowls*, *grass*, *herbs*, *oil*, *wine*, *man*, and all his movements, the *skill* that builds and sails a *ship*, and the *sensations* that make *leviathan* play, all these, all the parts and powers of nature are formed, animated, and directed by God.---Thirdly this sense is agreeable to other passages of scripture.---the Lord rained *fire*. Gen. xix. 24. The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong *east wind*, Exod. xiv. 21. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, *stormy winds* fulfilling his word, Psalm cxlviii. 8.

fire of the day of judgment here under an idea somewhat different from that given in all these passages. In these fire is represented as punishing only the wicked, the righteous do not feel the action of it: but here in the text it is described as alike kindled for the righteous and the wicked; at least it is said that the works of both shall be *revealed by fire.* Now we should be obliged to have recourse to some subterfuge to make sense of the text, if we understood the apostle speaking of the fire of *hell.* How can the works of the righteous and the wicked be equally *manifested* by the fire of hell!

I think, a much more simple and natural exposition may be given of the words of the text. The chief design of a day of judgment is to examine the actions of men, and to distinguish bad actions from good, and good from better. This is an idea contained in a thousand passages of scripture, and it would be useless to prove it. Now the apostle, in order to make us understand that the evidence shall be complete, represents it under the similitude of the most perfect and best known trials among men, of which that of metals by fire certainly excels in its kind. Hence it is, that the sacred writers have chosen this to explain the trials, which God makes his children go through in this world. I select only one passage out of a great number; *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour, and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ,* 1 Pet. i. 7. The *trial* of your faith is a remarkable word in the original. Good Greek authors use it for the trial of metals in the fire. Isocrates uses the term exactly as St. Peter does, *we try gold in the fire.* I return to the text, which I left only for the sake of explaining it the better. St. Paul here represents the day of judgment as a time of the most exact and severe trial of the actions of men, and particularly of the doctrines of ministers of the gospel. For this purpose he compares the trial with that of metals by fire. Saith he, the different doctrines of ministers of the gospel shall then be put into a crucible that they may be fully known, as by the same process pure gold is separated and distinguished from foreign matter mixed with it: *Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day,* that is, the day of judgment, *shall declare it,* because it shall be *revealed by fire,* that is, the day of judgment, like *fire* applied to metals, *shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.*

The apostle pursuing the same metaphor adds, *If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward*, that is, if the doctrine, which a minister of the gospel shall have taught, and built on *the foundation that is laid*, if this doctrine shall abide the trial of the day of judgment, as gold abides that of fire, the preacher shall receive a reward: but if his doctrine *burns*, if it will not abide this trial, if it be like the foreign matter mixed with gold, and which burns when gold is tried with fire, then the preacher will lose the honour and pleasure of his work, he will have no reward for his ministerial services: but as to himself, perhaps he may be saved, however, he will be saved with difficulty, *he will be saved as by fire.* Why may he be saved? Because his doctrine did not go to the subversion of the principal truths of the christian religion. Why will he be saved with difficulty? Because his doctrine was inconsistent with the dignity of christianity. Why is the salvation of such a man uncertain? Because it is possible, that the motives which induced him to preach such a doctrine, and to prefer it before what St. Paul compares to *gold* and *precious stones*, may have been so detestable as to deserve all the punishments denounced against such as shall have subverted the foundations of the gospel. If you doubt whether the sense we have given to this metaphorical expression, *saved as by fire*, be just, we beg leave to observe in three words that it is well founded.

First, the sense given is not forced, for nothing is more natural than to express a great difficulty by similitudes taken from difficult things, thus we say *a man escaped from shipwreck*, to describe a man who hath escaped from any great danger: and the same idea is expressed with equal aptness, when we say a man freed from some great danger hath escaped *the fire.*

Secondly, the metaphor is not only just and beautiful in itself, but it is common in profane writers. In this manner Æmilius Paulus, to shew that he had hardly escaped the rage of the populace during his first consulship, says, that he escaped a popular *conflagration*, in which he was half burnt. In like manner Cicero, speaking of the miseries of life, says, that it would be better not to be born, but that if we have the misfortune to be born, the most advantageous thing is to die soon, and to flee from the hands of fortune as from a *conflagration.*

Thirdly, the metaphor in the text is common in other parts of scripture, as in Amos, *I have overthrown some of you.*

you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomarrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning, chap. iv. 11. The apostle Jude adopts the same figure, and says, *save others with fear pulling them out of the fire,* ver. 13.

By establishing the true sense of the text on solid grounds, I think we have sufficiently refuted all erroneous opinions concerning it, and yet there are two, which for different reasons I cannot help mentioning.

The first is the opinion of those, who think, the apostle meant by the *fire* in the text the destruction of Jerusalem. This opinion hath an air of probability, yet I do not think it certain. The time of the destruction of Jerusalem is often called in scripture, as well as the time of the final judgment, *that day,* the day of the Lord, and the calamities of the day are represented under the idea of fire, and literally speaking, fire did make sad ravages in Jerusalem and in the temple. However, there is a deal of perplexity in the paraphrase given of the text by such as are of this opinion. This is it, exactly as we have transcribed it from a celebrated scholar. "The fire of the destruction of Jerusalem will prove whether the doctrines of your teachers be those of the gospel, or whether they be foreign notions. He, whose doctrine will abide this trial, shall receive a reward: but he, whose doctrine will not abide it, will lose the fruit of his ministerial labours."

We said this opinion was probable: but we cannot say so with the least shadow of truth of the opinion of some of the church of Rome, who pretend that the apostle speaks here of the fire of purgatory.

Because, suppose purgatory were taught in other passages of scripture, which we are very far from granting, great violence must be done to this text to find the doctrine here; for on supposition the apostle speaks of purgatory, what do these words mean? The fire of purgatory shall try the doctrines of the ministers of the gospel, so that substantial doctrines, and vain doctrines shall be alike tried by this fire!

Because St. Paul says here of this fire things directly opposite to the idea, which the church of Rome forms of purgatory. They exempt saints of the first order, and in this class St. Paul certainly holds one of the most eminent places: but our apostle, far from thinking himself safe from such a *trial by fire* as he speaks of in the text, expresly says, *every man's work* shall be tried, that is, the work of ministers who shall have built on the foundation

gold, silver, precious stones, shall be tried, as well as that of other ministers, who shall have built on the foundation *wood and stubble.*

But the chief reason for our rejecting the comment of the church of Rome is the nature of the doctrine itself, in proof of which they bring the text. A heterodox doctrine, which enervates the great sacrifice, that Jesus Christ offered on the cross for the sins of mankind; a doctrine directly opposite to a great number of passages of scripture, which tell us that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,* that *he that believeth is passed from death unto life,* that when *the righteous dieth, he is taken from the evil to come, and shall enter into peace,* Rom. viii. 1. John v. 24. and Isa. lvii. 1, 2. A doctrine founded on a thousand visions and fabulous tales, more fit for times of pagan darkness than days of evangelical light; a sordid doctrine that evidently owes its being to that base interest, which it nourishes with profusion, luxury, and extravagance; a barbarous doctrine, which produces in a dying man a dreadful expectation of passing from the agonies of dying to whole ages of greater agony in flames of fire.

IV. Let us now proceed to examine with what eye we ought to consider the three sorts of preachers, of which the apostle speaks, and so *apply* the subject *to practice.* The first are such as *lay under another foundation* beside that which is laid. The second are those, who *build on the foundation,* laid by the master builder, *wood, hay, and stubble.* The third are such as *build* on the same foundation *gold, silver, and precious stones.*

Thanks be to God we have no other concern with the first of these articles except that, which compassion obliges us to take for the wickedness of such teachers, and the blindness of their hearers!

What a strange condition is that of a man, who employs his study, his reading, his meditation, his labours, his public and private discourses to subvert the foundations of that edifice, which Jesus Christ came to erect among mankind, and which he hath cemented with his blood! What a doctrine is that of a man, who presumes to call himself a guide of conscience, a pastor of a flock, an interpreter of scripture, and who gives only false directions, who poisons the souls committed to his care, and darkens and tortures the word of God! Jesus Christ, to confound the glosses of the false

false teachers of his time, said, *ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time* so and so: *but I say unto you* otherwise. The teachers, of whom I speak, use another language, and they say, you have heard, that it was said by Jesus Christ, so and so: but I say to you otherwise. You have heard, that it was said by Jesus Christ, *search the scriptures:* but I say to you, that the scriptures are dangerous, and that only one order of men ought to see them. You have heard, that it hath been said in the inspired writings, *prove all things:* but I say unto you, it is not for you to examine, but to submit. You have heard that it hath been said by Jesus Christ, that *the rulers over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so among you.* But I say unto you, that the pontiff hath a right to domineer not only over the Gentiles, but even over those who rule them. You have heard, that it hath been said *blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,* that the soul of Lazarus *was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom:* but I, I say unto you, that the dead pass from the miseries of this life only into incomparably greater miseries in the flames of purgatory.

If this disposition be deplorable considered in itself, it becomes much more so by attending to the motives that produce it. Sometimes it is ignorance, which makes people sincerely crawl in the thickest darkness amidst the finest opportunities of obtaining light. Sometimes it is obstinacy, which impels people to maintain, for ever to maintain, what they have once affirmed. Sometimes it is pride, that will not acknowledge a mistake. Sometimes it is interest, which fixes them in a communion, that opens a path to riches and grandeurs, benefices and mitres, an archiepiscopal throne and a triple crown. Always, it is negligence of the great salvation, which deserves all our pains, vigilance the most exact, and sacrifices the most difficult.

My brethren, let us acknowledge the favour conferred on us by providence in delivering us from these errors. Let us bless the happy days of the reformation, in which our societies were built on the foundation, laid by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Let us never dishonour it by an irregular life. Let us never regret the sacrifices we have made to it. Let us be always ready to make more. We have already, many of us, given up our establishments, our fortunes and our country; let us give up our passions, and if it be requisite our lives. Let us endeavour to perpetuate and extend it, let us defend it

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by our prayers, as well as by our labour and vigilance. Let us pray to God for this poor people, from whose eyes a fatal bandage hides the light of truth. Let us pray for such of our brethren as know it, but have not courage to profess it. Let us pray for those poor children, who seem as if they must receive it with their first nourishment, because their parents know it: but who do not yet know it, and who perhaps, alas! will never know it. If our incessant prayers for them continue to be rejected; if our future efforts to move in their favour the compassion of a merciful God be without success, as our former efforts have been; if our future tears, like our former sorrows be in vain, yet we will exclaim, *O Lord, how long! O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night, give thyself no rest, let not the apple of thine eye cease! O ye, that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*, Rev. vi. 10. Lament. ii. 18. and Isa. lvii. 6, 7.

It is not the limit prescribed to this sermon, that forbids my detailing the two remaining articles: but a reason of another kind. I fear, should I characterize the two kinds of doctrines, which are both built on the foundation, but which however are not of equal value, I myself should lay another foundation. The religion of Jesus Christ is founded on love. Jesus Christ is love. The virtue, which he most of all recommended to his disciples, is love.

I appeal here to those, who have some idea of remnants of divisions yet amongst us. How can I, without rekindling a fire hid under embers, and which we have done all in our power entirely to extinguish, shew the vanity of different classes of divers doctrines of *wood, hay, and stubble?*

In a first class it would be necessary to expose a ministry spent in questions of mere curiosity, and to contrast it with that which is employed only to give that clear knowledge, and full demonstration of the great truths of religion, of which they are capable.

In a second class, it would be necessary to contrast discourses of simple speculation tending only to exercise the mind with such practical discourses, as tend to sanctify the heart, regulate the life, to render the child obedient to his parent, and the parent kind and equitable to his child, the subject submissive to the laws of his rulers, and the ruler attentive

attentive to the happiness of the subjects, the rich charitable, and the poor humble and patient.

In a third class, I should be obliged to consider some productions of disordered minds, fancies attributed to the Spirit of God, charging religion with the tinsel of the marvellous, more proper to divert children than to satisfy inquisitive minds, and to contrast these with the productions of men, who never set a step without the light of the gospel in their hands, and infallible truth for their guide.

In a fourth class, we ought to contrast those miserable sophisms, which pretend to support truth with the arms of error, and include without scruple whatever favours, and whatever seems to favour the cause to be maintained, with clear ideas, close reasonings and natural conclusions, such as a preacher brings, who knows how to weigh in a just balance truth and falsehood, probability and proof, conjecture and demonstration.

In a fifth class, I should have to lay open the superficial ideas, sometimes low and vulgar, of a man without either elevation or penetration, and to contrast them with the discourses of such happy geniuses as soar up to God, even to the inaccessible God.

All these dissimilitudes it would be my duty to shew: but I will not proceed, and I make a sacrifice to charity of all the details, which the subject would bear. I will not even describe the miseries, which are denounced against such as build *hay and stubble* on the foundation of the gospel, nor the unhappiness of those, who shall be found at last to have preferred such doctrines before the *gold, silver, and precious stones*, of which the apostle speaks. Let them weigh this expression of the holy man, *he shall be saved, yet so, as by fire.* Let the first think of the account they must give of their ministry, and the second of the use they have made of their time, and of their superstitious docility.

I would rather offer you objects more attracting, and urge motives more tender. We told you at the beginning of this discourse that your duties, christian people, have a close connection with ours, and we may add, our destination is closely connected with yours.

What will be the destiny of such as shall have built on the foundations of christianity *gold, silver, and precious stones?* What will be the destiny of those, who shall have exercised such a ministry? What will be the destiny of such as have incorporated themselves with it? Ah! my brethren, I place my

my happiness and glory in not being able fully to answer this question. I congratulate myself for not being able to find images lively enough to represent the pomp, with which I hope, my most beloved auditors, you will one day be adorned. Yet I love to contemplate that great day, in which the *work* of faithful ministers, and faithful christians will be made manifest by *fire*. I love to fill my mind with the day, in which God will *come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*, 2 Thess. i. 10. when *he shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people*, Psal. l. 4. saying, *Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice*, ver. 5. I love to satiate my soul with ideas of *the redeemed of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation* in company with *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels*, Rev. v. 9. 11. At the head of this august body I see three chiefs.

The first is *Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. I see this divine leader presenting himself before his father with his wounds, his cross and his blood, and saying, *Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*, John xvii. 4, 5. Having glorified the head, glorify the members, save my people. Then will the eternal Father crown such just and holy petitions with success. Then will be accomplished in regard to Jesus Christ this magnificent promise, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession*, Psal. ii. 8. Such as oppose thine empire govern *with a rod of iron*, and *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel:* but enter thou into thy kingdom with thy subjects, thy saints, thy well-beloved, and share with them thy glorious inheritance.

The second leaders are prophets, evangelists, and apostles, appearing before God with the conquests they made, the nations they converted, the persecutions they endured for the love of God and his gospel. Then will the promises made to these holy men be accomplished, *they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*, Dan. xii. 4. Matt. xix. 28.

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The third will be such ministers as have been *followers of* the apostles, *even as they also* were *of Christ.* I think I see these ministers, humbled for their faults, convinced of their frailty, imploring the divine mercy for the blemishes of their ministry: but yet with that humble confidence which the compassion of God allows, and saying, behold us, the doctrine we have preached, the minds we have informed, the wanderers we have reclaimed, and with the hearts which we have had the honour of animating with thy love. What, in that great day, what will be your destiny, christian people? Will yours be the hearts, which we shall have animated with divine love, or those from which we never could banish the love of the world? Shall you be among the backsliders, whom we shall have reclaimed, or among such as shall have persisted in sin? Shall yours be the minds we have enlightened, or among those, who shall have lain in darkness and ignorance?

Ah! My brethren, the first of our wishes, the most affectionate of our prayers, our secret meditations, our public discourses, whatever we undertake, whatever we are we consecrate to prepare you for that great day, *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Ye are our glory and joy,* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. To God be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XI.

THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD.

ROMANS xi. 33.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are *his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

ONE of the principal causes of the depravity of mankind is, that they form mean ideas of God. The idea of the God we adore, and the notion of the morality we ought to practise are two things closely connected together. If we consider God as a being elevated, great and sublime, our morality will be great, sublime and elevated too. If, on the contrary, we consider God as a being, whose designs are narrow, whose power is limited, and whose plans are partial, we shall practise a morality adapted to such an imaginary God.

My brethern, there are two very different ways of forming this sublime idea, which hath such an influence over religion, and morality. The magnificence of God may be understood by what is *known of God by the things that are made*, by the brilliancy of the sun, by the extent of the firmament, and by all the various creatures which we behold; and judging of the workman by the work, we shall exclaim in sight of so many wonderful works, *O Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?* Rom. i. 19, 20. Psal. lviii. 1, &c.

But there is another way to know the magnificence of God, a way less accessible indeed, but more noble, and even more plain to the man, *the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened*, Eph. i. 18. that is, to judge of God not by the things that are seen, but by the things that are not seen, not by what we know, but by what we do not know. In this sublime way the soul loseth itself in a depth of divine magnificence, like the seraphims, covers its face before the majesty of God, and exclaims with the prophet, *verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*, Isa. xlv. 15. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever*, Deut. xxix. 29. It is on this obscure side, that we propose to shew you the Deity to day.

Darkness will serve as for light, and the impenetrable depth of his decrees will fill our minds with sound and practical knowledge. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

In order to enter into the mind of the apostle, it is necessary to observe the subject to which he applies the text, and never to lose sight of the design of this whole epistle. The apostle chiefly proposes to counteract a scandalous schism in the church of Rome. This church was composed of two sorts of christians, some converts from judaism, others from paganism. The Jews considered the Gentiles with contempt, as they always had been accustomed to consider foreigners. For their parts, they thought, they had a natural right to all the benefits of the Messiah, because being born Jews, they were the legitimate heirs of Abraham, to whom the promise was made, whereas the Gentiles partook of these benefits only by mere favour. St. Paul attacks this prejudice, proves that Jews and Gentiles, being all alike *under sin*, had all an equal need of a covenant of grace; that both derived their calling from the mercy of God; that no one was rejected as a Gentile, or admitted as a Jew: but that they only should share the salvation published by the Messiah, who had been elected in the eternal decrees of God. The Jews could not relish such humbling ideas, nor accommodate this doctrine to the prerogatives of their nation; and much less could they admit the system of the apostle on predestination. St. Paul employs the chapter, from which we have taken our text, and the two chapters before to remove their difficulties. He

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turns himself, so to speak, on every side to elucidate the subject. He reasons, proves, argues: but after he hath heaped proofs upon proofs, reasonings upon reasonings, and solutions upon solutions, he acknowledgeth, in the words of the text, that he glories in falling beneath his subject. In some sense he classes himself with the most ignorant of his readers, allows that he hath not received a sufficient measure of the Spirit of God to enable him to fathom such depths, and he exclaims on the brink of this great profound. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* The apostle therefore wrote these words of the *deep things of God* chiefly with a view to the conduct of God with regard to such as he appoints to glory, and such as he leaves in perdition. I grant, were this text to be accurately discussed, it ought to be considered in regard to these events, and these doctrines: but nothing hinders our examining it in a more extensive view. The apostle lays down a general maxim, and takes occasion from a particular subject to establish an universal truth, that is, that such is the magnificence of God that it absorbs all our thought, and that to attempt to reduce the conduct of God to a level with our frail reason is to be guilty of extreme rashness.

This is what we will endeavour to prove. Come, christians, follow us, and learn to know yourselves, and to feel your insignificance. We are going, by shewing you the Deity in four different views to open to you four great deeps, and to give you four reasons for exclaiming with the apostle, *O the depth!*

The four ways in which God reveals himself to man, are four manners to display his perfections, and at the same time they are four abysses, in which our imperfect reason is lost. These ways are—first an idea of the Deity—secondly of nature—thirdly of providence—and fourthly of revelation: four ways, if I may venture to speak thus, all shining with light, and yet all covered with adorable darkness.

I. The first mirror in which we contemplate God, and at the same time the first abyss in which our imperfect reason is lost, is the idea we have of the *divine perfections*. This is a path leading to God, a mirror of the Deity. To prove this, it is not necessary to examine how we came by this idea, whether it be natural or acquired, whether we derive

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it from our parents or our tutors, whether the Creator hath immediately engraven it on the mind, or whether we ourselves have formed it by a chain of principles and consequences; a question much agitated in the schools, sometimes settled, and sometimes controverted, and on which both sides affirm many clear and substantial, though opposite propositions. Of myself, I am always fully persuaded, that I have an idea of a Being supremely excellent, and one of whose perfections I am not able to omit without destroying the essence of the Supreme Being to whom it belongs. I know too that there must be somewhere without me an object answering to my idea; for as I think, and as I know I am not the author of the faculty that thinks within me, I am obliged to conclude, that a foreign cause hath produced it. If this foreign cause is a being, that derives its existence from another foreign cause, I am necessarily obliged to proceed from one step to another, and to go on till I find a self-existent being, and this self-existent being is the infinite Being. I have then an idea of the infinite Being. This idea is not a phantom of my creation, it is the portrait of an original that exists independently of my reflections. This is the first way to the Creator: this is the first mirror of his perfections.

O how long, how infinitely extended is this way! How impossible for the mind to pervade a distance so immense! How obscure is this mirror! How is my soul dismayed, when I attempt to sail in this immeasurable ocean! An infamous man, who lived in the beginning of the last century, a man who conceived the most abominable design that ever was, who formed with eleven persons of his own cast a college of infidelity, from whence he might send his emissaries into all the world to raise out of every mind the opinion of the existence of God, this man took a very singular method to prove that there was no God, that was to state the general idea of God. He thought, to define was to destroy it, and that to say what God is, was the best way to disprove his existence. *God*, said that impious man, *God is a being who exists through infinite ages, and yet is not capable of past or to come, he fills all without being in any place, he is fixed without situation, he pervades all without motion, he is good without quality, great without quantity, universal without parts, moving all things without being moved himself, his will constitutes his power, and his power*

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*is confounded with his will, without all, within all, beyond all, before all, and after all**.

But though it be absurd to argue against the existence of God from the eminence of his perfections, yet it is the wisdom of man to derive from this subject inferences humbling to his proud and infatuated reason. We detest the design of the writer just now mentioned, but we approve of a part of the definition, which our athiest gives of God. Far from pretending that such a difinition degrades the object of our worship from his supreme rank in the scale of beings, it inclines us to pay him the most profound homage, of which creatures are capable, and to lay down our feeble reason before his infinite excellence.

Yes, *God is a being who exists through infinite ages; and yet is not capable of past or to come.* The vast number of ages, which the rapidity of time hath carried away, are as present to him as this very indivisible moment, and the most distant futurity doth not conceal any remote event from his eyes. He unites in one single instant, the past, the present, and all periods to come. He is by excellence, *I am that I am.* He loses nothing by ages spent, he acquires nothing by succession. Yes, *God fills all without being in any place. Ascend up into heaven, he is there. Make your bed*

* The book, from which our author quoted the above passage, is entitled *Amphitheatrum æternæ providentiæ . . . adversus atheos*, &c. Lyons. 1615. 8vo. The author *Vanini* was a Neapolitan, born in 1585. He was educated at Rome, and ordained a priest at Padua. He travelled into many countries, and was persecuted in most. In 1614 he was imprisoned in England for forty-nine days. After his enlargement he became a monk in Guienne. From the convent he was banished for his immorality. He found, however, powerful patrons. Mareschal Bassompiere made him his chaplain, and his famous *Amphitheatre* was approved by four persons, a doctor of divinity, the vicar general of Lyons, the king's proctor, and the lieutenant general of Lyons, in which they affirm, "that having read the book, there was nothing in it contrary to the Roman Catholic faith," one example of the ignorance or carelessness with which licensers of the press discharge their office, and consequently one argument among thousands for the freedom of the press. This unfortunate man was condemned at Toulouse to be burnt to death, which sentence was executed Feb. 16, 1619. The execution of this cruel sentence, cast into logical form runs thus: Vanini denied the being of a God---the parliament of Toulouse burnt Vanini--- therefore there is a God.

bed in hell, behold he is there. Take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall his hand lead you. Say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about you, Psal. cxxxix. 8, &c. Yet he hath no place, and the quality by which our bodies are inclosed in these walls, and adjusted with the particles of air that surround us, cannot agree with his spirituality. *God pervades all without motion.* The quickness of lightning, which in an instant passes from east to west, cannot equal the rapidity with which his intelligence ascends to the highest heavens, descends to the deepest abysses, and visits in a moment all parts of the universe. Yet he is immoveable, and doth not quit one place to be present in another, but abides with his disciples on earth, while he is in heaven, in the centre of felicity and glory. *His will constitutes his power, and his power doth not differ from his will.* All creatures in the universe owe their existence to a single act of his will, and a thousand new worlds wait only for such an act to spring from nothing and to shine with glory. *God is above all,* all being subject to his power. *Within all,* all being an emanation of his will. *Before all, after all.* Stretch thine imagination, frail but haughty creature, try the utmost efforts of thy genius, elevate thy meditations, collect thy thoughts, see whether thou canst attain to comprehend an existence without beginning, a duration without succession, a presence without circumference, an immobility without place, and agility without motion, and many other attributes, which the mind can conceive, but which language is too imperfect to express. See, weigh, calculate, *It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* Job. xi. 8, 7. Let us then exclaim on the border of abyss, *O the depth!*

II. The second way that leads us to the Creator, and at the same time the second abyss in which our reason is lost, is the works of *nature.* The study of nature is easy, and all the works of nature have a bright and luminous side. In the style of a prophet, *the heavens* have a voice, which *declare the glory of God*; and, as an apostle expresses it, creation is a visible image of the *invisible things of God*; yet there is also a dark obscure side. What a prodigious variety of creatures are there beyond the sphere of our senses!

ses! How many thousands, how many *ten thousand times ten thousand* spirits, called angels, archangels, cherubims, seraphims, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, of all which we know not either the properties, the operations, the number, or the employment! What a prodigious multitude of stars, and suns, and revolving worlds, in comparison of which our earth is nothing but a point, and of all which we know neither the variety, the glory, nor the appointment! How many things are there on earth, plants, mineral, and animals, into the nature and use of which the industry of man could never penetrate! Why so much treasure hid in the depths of the sea? Why such vast countries, such impenetrable forests, and such uninhabitted climes as have never been surveyed, and the whole of which perhaps will never be discovered? What is the use of some insects, and some monsters, which seem to be a burden to nature, and made only to disfigure it? Why doth the Creator deprive man of many rich productions, that would be of the greatest advantage to him, while he abandons them to beasts of the field or fishes of the sea, which derive no benefit from them? Whence came rivers, fountains, winds and tempests, the power of the loadstone, and the ebbing and flowing of the tides? Philosopher! reply, or rather avow your ignorance, and acknowledge how deep the ways of your Creator are.

But it is but little to humble man, to detect his ignorance on these subjects. It is not astonishing that he should err in paths so sublime, and it is more glorious to him to have attempted these impracticable roads, than shameful to have done so without success. There are other objects more proper to humble human reason. Objects in appearance less subject to difficulty absorb the mind of man, whenever he attempts thoroughly to investigate them. Let him consider himself, and he will lose himself in meditating on his own essence. What is man? What is that soul, which thinks and reflects? What constitutes the union of a spirit with a portion of matter? What is that matter, to which a spirit is united? So many questions, so many abysses, so many unfathomable depths in the ways of the Creator.

What is the *soul* of man? In what doth its essence consist? Is it the power of displaying his faculties? But then this consequence would follow, that a soul may have the essence of a soul without having ever thought, reasoned or

reflected, provided it hath the power of doing so. Is it the act of thinking? But then it would follow, that a spirit, when it ceases to think, ceases to be a spirit, which seems contrary to experience. What then is a soul? Is it a collection of successive thoughts? But how can such and such thoughts, not one of which apart is essential to a soul, constitute the essence of it when they are joined together? Is it something distinct from all these? Give us, if it be possible, a clear idea of this subject. What is a soul? Is it a substance immaterial, indivisible, different from body, and which cannot be enveloped in its ruins? Certainly: but when we give you this notion, we rather tell you what the soul is not than what it is. You will say, you remove false notions, but you give us no true and positive ideas; you tell us indeed that spirit is not body, but you do not explain what spirit is, and we demand an idea clear, real and adequate.

As I confound myself by considering the nature of my soul, so I am perplexed again, when I examine the union of this soul with this body. Let us be informed, by what miracle a substance without extension and without parts can be united to a substance material and extended? What connection is there between willing to move and motion? What relation has a trace on the brain to an idea of the mind? How does the soul go in search of ideas before ideas present themselves? If ideas present themselves what occasion for search? To have recourse to the power of God is wise, I grant, if we avail ourselves of this answer to avoid our ignorance: but if we use it to cover that, if we pretend to explain every thing by saying God is omnipotent, and can do all these things, we certainly deceive ourselves. It is to say, I know nothing; in philosophical terms, and when, it should seem, we affect to say, I perfectly understand it.

In fine I demand an explication of the human *body*. What am I saying? the human body! I take the smallest particle of it; I take only one atom, one little grain of dust, and I give it to be examined by all the schools, and all the universities in the world. This atom hath extent, it may be divided, it is capable of motion, it reflects light, and every one of these properties furnishes a thousand and a thousand questions, which the greatest philosophers can never answer.

My brethren, when we are in the schools, when we occupy the chair of a professor, when we make it a law to answer

answer ever every question, it is easy to talk, and, as the wise man expresses it, to *find a great deal to say**. There is an art, which is called *maintaining* a thesis, and this art is very properly named, for it doth not consist in weighing and solving difficulties, or in acknowledging our ignorance: but in persisting to affirm our own position, and obstinately to defend it. But when we retire to our studies, coolly meditate, and endeavour to satisfy ourselves, if we have any accuracy of thought, we reason in another manner. Every sincere and ingenuous man must acknowledge that solidity, weight, light and extent are subjects, on which many very curious, and very finely imagined things have been said, but which to this day leave the mind almost in as much uncertainty as before. Thus this sublime genius, this author of so many volumes, this consummate philosopher cannot explain what a grain of dust is, so that one atom, one single atom is a rock fatal to all his philosophy, against it all his science is dashed, shipwrecked and lost.

Let us conclude that nature, this mirror descriptive of God is dark and obscure. This is emphatically expressed by two inspired writers, the apostle Paul and holy Job. The first says, *God hath made all nations of men, the earth, the appointed seasons, and the bounds of men's habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*, Acts xvii. 26, 29. This is both a passable road to God, and an unfathomable abyss. *That they might seek the Lord;* this is a way leading to God. *That they might find him by feeling after him;* this is the abyss. In like manner Job describes in lively colours the multitude and variety of the works of the Creator, and finishes by acknowledging, that all we know is nothing in comparison of what we are ignorant of. *He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He hath compassed the waters with bounds. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea*

* Eccles. vii. 29. The English translation of this text is, man hath *sought out many inventions*. The French bible reads, Ont cherche *beaucoup de descours*, that is, mankind have found out a great many *questions* to ask, and a great many *sophisms* to affirm on this subject; or in other words a *great deal to say* concerning original rectitude of man. The original vague terms are rendered by some critics, *Ipse se infinitis miscuerit quæstionibus.*

with his power. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Yet *these are* only *parts of his ways!* Job xxvi. 7, &c. Weigh these expressions well. This firmament, this earth, these waters, these pillars of heaven, this boundless space, the sun with its light, the heavens with their stars, the earth with its plants, the sea with its fish, these, *lo, these are* only *parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him! The glorious extent of his power who can understand!* Let us then, placed as we are on the borders of the works of nature, humbly exclaim, *O the depth!*

III. *Providence* is the third path to God, and affords us new motives to adore his perfections: but which also confounds the mind, and makes us feel that God is no less incomprehensible in his manner of governing the world than in that of creating it. It would be easy to prove this, if time would allow us to examine the secret ways, which providence uses to govern this universe. Let us be content to cast our eyes a moment on the conduct of providence in the government of the church for the last century and half.

Who would have thought that in a neighbouring kingdom a cruel and superstitious king*, the greatest enemy that the reformation ever had, he, who by the fury of his arms, and by the productions of his pen, opposed this great work, refuting those whom he could not persecute, and persecuting those whom he could not refute, who would have thought that this monarch should first serve the work he intended to subvert, clear the way for reformation, and by shaking off the yoke of the Roman pontiff execute the plan of providence, while he seemed to do nothing but satiate his voluptuousness and ambition?

Who would have thought that the ambitious Clement†, to maintain some chimerical rights, which the pride of the clergy had forged, and to which the cowardice of the people and the effeminacy of their princes had granted, who would have believed, that this ambitious pope, by hurling the thunders of the Vetican against this king, would have lost all that great kingdom, and thus would have given the first stab to a tyranny, which he intended to confirm?

Who would have imagined that Zuinglius would have had such amazing success among the people in the world the

* Henry VIII. of England. † Pope Clement VII.

the most inviolably attached to the customs of their predecessors, a people scrupulously retaining even the dress of their ancestors, a people above all so inimical to innovations in religion, that they will hardly bare a new explication of a passage of scripture, a new argument, or a modern critical remark, who would have supposed, that they could have been persuaded to embrace a religion diametrically opposite to that, which they had imbibed with their mother's milk?

Who would have believed that Luther could have surmounted the obstacles, that opposed the success of his preaching in Germany, and that the proud emperor*, who reckoned among his captives pontiffs and kings, could not subdue one miserable monk?

Who would have thought that the barbarous tribunal of the inquisition, which had enslaved so many nations to superstition, should have been in these provinces one of the principle causes of our reformation?

And perhaps the dark night, which now envelops one part of the church, will issue in a bright morning. Perhaps they, who in future time speak of providence, will have reason to add to a catalogue of the deep things of divine government the manner, in which God shall have delivered the truth oppressed in a kingdom, where it once flourished in vigour and beauty. Perhaps, the repeated blows given to the reformed may serve only to establish the reformation. But we abridge this third article, and proceed to the fourth, in which we are to treat of *the depths of revelation.*

IV. Shall we produce the mortifying list of unanswerable questions to which many doctrines of our religion are liable; as for example those which regard the Trinity, the incarnation, the satisfaction, the union of two natures in Jesus Christ, the secret ways of the holy Spirit in converting the souls of men, the precise nature of the happiness to be enjoyed in the intermediate state between our death and our resurrection, the faculties of glorified bodies, the recollection of what we shall have seen in this world, and many more of the same kind?

All this would carry us too far from the principal design of the apostle. It is time to return to the precise subject, which inspired him with this exclamation. The words of our text are, as we have intimated, the conclusion of a discourse, contained in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters

* Charles V.

ters of this epistle. These chapters are the cross of divines. The questions there treated of concerning the decrees of God are so abstruse, that in all ages of the church, and particularly since the schism of Pelagius, divines orthodox and hetrodox have employed all their efforts to give us a system free from difficulties, and they have all failed in their design.

To enable you to comprehend this, we are going succinctly to state their different systems; and the short view we shall take will be sufficient to convince you, that the subject is beyond the reach of the human mind, and that though the opinion of our churches hath this advantage above others, that it is more conformable to right reason, and to the decisions of scripture, yet it is not without its abysses and depths.

Let us begin with the system of Socinus and his followers. God, according to them, not only hath not determined the salvation of his children, but he could not even foresee it. Whatever man resolves depends on his own volition, and whatever depends on human volition cannot be an object of the knowledge of God, so that God could not foresee whether I should believe or not believe, whether I should obey or not obey, whether I should receive the gospel or reject it. God made no other decree than that of saving such as believe, obey, and submit to his gospel: these things depend on my will, what depends on my will is uncertain, an uncertain object cannot be an object of certain knowledge: God therefore cannot certainly foresee whether my condition will be eternally happy, or eternally miserable.

This is the system. Thanks be to God, we preach to a christian auditory. It is not necessary to refute these errors, and you feel, I persuade myself, that to reason in this manner is not to elucidate, but subvert religion; it is at once to degrade God from his Deity and scripture from its infallibility.

This system degrades God, for what, pray, is a God, who created beings, and who could not foresee what would result from their existence? A God who formed spirits united to bodies by certain laws, and who did not know how to combine these laws so as to foresee the effects they would produce? A God forced to suspend his judgment? A God who every day learns something new, and who doth know to day what will happen to-morrow. A God who cannot tell whether peace will be concluded, or war continue to ravage

ravage the world; whether religion will be received in a certain kingdom, or whether it will be banished; whether the right heir will succeed to the crown, or whether the crown will be set on the head of an usurper? For according to the different determinations of the wills of men, of king or people, the prince will make peace, or declare war, religion will be banished or admitted, the tyrant or the lawful king will occupy the throne: for if God cannot foresee how the volitions of men will be determined, he cannot foresee any of these events. What is this but to degrade God from his Deity, and to make the most perfect of all intelligences a being involved in darkness and uncertainty like ourselves.

Further, to deny the presence of God is to degrade scripture from its infallibility, for how can we pretend to respect scripture when we deny that God knows the determinations, and volitions of mankind? What then are we to understand by all the express declarations on this subject? For example, what doth the psalmist mean? *O God, thou hast searched and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou art acquainted with all my ways, for there is not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it altogether*, Psal. cxxxix. 1, &c. What means God himself speaking by Ezekiel? *Thus saith the Lord to the house of Israel, I know the thoughts that come into your mind every one of them*, chap. xi. 5. And again by Isaiah? *I know that thou wouldst deal very treacherously*, chap. xlviii. 8. What did St. Peter mean? speaking of his own thoughts, he said, *Lord thou knowest all things*, John xxi. 17. What does the wise man mean, who assures us, not only that God knows the hearts of kings, but that he hath them *in his hand, and turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth as rivers of water?* Prov. xxi. 1.

Above all, how can this principle be reconciled to many express prophecies of events, which being closely connected with the volitions of men could not have been certainly foretold, unless God at the time had a certain knowledge of these determinations? "The prescience of God, saith Tertullian, hath as many witnesses as there are prophets and and prophecies*." Had not God foreseen that Jesus Christ would preach the gospel in Judea, that the Jews would hate him,

* In his second book against Marcion.

him, that they would deliver him to Pilate, that they would solicit his death, that Pilate would have the meanness and pusillanimity to yield to their intreaties; had not God known all these things, how could he have predicted them?

But the men we oppose do not much respect the decisions of scripture. The principle, to which all this system tends, is, that reason is to decide on the doctrines of scripture, and not that the doctrines of scripture are to direct reason. This principle once granted all the doctrines of our faith are subverted, as experience proves. See into what rash declarations this principle hath conducted Socinus and his followers. What decision of scripture, what doctrine of faith, what truth however established, repeated and enforced, hath it not allured them to deny? The bondage of the human will seems to destroy the nature of man: this bondage must be denied. But the doctrine of absolute decrees seems to disagree with the liberty of man: these absolute decrees must be denied. But the foreknowledge of God cannot be allowed without the doctrine of decrees: the foreknowledge of God must be denied. But a thousand prophecies prove this prescience: the mystical sense of these prophecies must be denied. But Jesus Christ hath verified them: then Jesus Christ must be denied, his titles, his attributes, his works, his worship, his satifaction, his divinity, his union to God, his incarnation must all be denied: he must be made a mere man, a prophet, a teacher distinguished from others only by some extraordinary talents: the whole system of the gospel, of salvation, and of redemption must be denied. To follow these ideas, my brethren, is to tumble from precipice to precipice without knowing where we shall stop.

We propose in the second place the system of our brethren of the confession of Augsburgh, and that of Arminius; for though they differ in other articles, yet they both agree pretty nearly in this point. Their system is this. They grant foreknowledge: but they deny fore-appointment. They allow indeed that God always foresaw who would be happy in heaven, and who victims in hell: but they tremble at the thesis, which affirms that God predestinated the first to felicity, and the last to misery. According to them, God made no other decree than to save believers, and to condemn infidels; he gave all men assistance sufficient to enable them to believe, and having only foreseen who would believe, and who would not believe, he made no decree to secure the faith of some, and the unbelief of the rest.

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Although it is never our custom to envenom controversy, and to tax people with heresy for not being of our opinion; though we would rather reconcile opposite opinions than triumph in refuting them; yet we cannot help making three reflections. First, this system doth not agree with itself—secondly it is directly opposite to many decisions of the holy Spirit, and particularly to the doctrine of the three chapters before us—and thirdly should we grant the whole, a thousand difficulties would remain in the doctrine of the decrees of God, and we should always be obliged to exclaim, as these brethren must on this article, *O the depth!*

1. We affirm, that this system is inconsistent with itself, that the doctrine of prescience supposes that of predestination, and that unless we deny that God foresaw our salvation, we are obliged by our own thesis to affirm that he predestinated us to it. I grant there is a sense, in which it is true that to foresee a thing is different from determining to bring it to pass: but there is another sense, in which to foresee and fore-appoint is one and the same thing. If I foresee that a prince sending armed troops into the house of the widow and orphan will expose that house to pillage, it is certain, my foresight hath no influence in the fate of that house, and in this case to foresee the act of plundering is not a determination to plunder. But if the prince foresee this event, if he knew the rage and fury with which his soldiers are animated, if he knew by experience that in such conjunctures they have committed such crimes, if, in spite of this prescience, he send his madmen into this house, if he allow them their armour, if he lay them under no restraint, if he do not appoint any superior officer to bridle their fury, do you not think, my brethren, that to foresee and to resolve this case are in him one and the same thing?

Apply these reflections to our subject. Let us suppose that before the creation of this world God had subsisted alone, with one other spirit such as you please to imagine. Suppose, when God had formed the plan of the world, he had communicated it to this spirit that subsisted with him. Suppose, that God who formed the plan, and the intelligence to whom he had communicated it, had both foreseen that some men of this world would be saved, and others lost; do you not perceive, that there would have been an essential difference between the prescience of God, and the prescience of the spirit we have imagined? The foreknow-

ledge of this last would not have had any influence either over the salvation, or destruction of mankind, because this spirit would have foreknown, and that would have been all: but is not the foreknowledge of God of another kind? Is that a speculative, idle, and uninfluential knowledge? He not only foresaw: but he created. He not only foresaw that man being free would make a good or ill use of his liberty, but he gave him that liberty. To foresee and to fore-appoint in God is only one and the same thing. If indeed you only mean to affirm, by saying that these are two different acts, that God doth no violence to his creatures, but that notwithstanding his prescience the one hardens himself freely, and the other believes freely: if this be all you mean, give us the right hand of fellowship, for this is exactly our system, and we have no need to asperse one another, as both hold the same doctrine.

There is a second inconvenience in the system of bare prescience, that is, that it doth not square with scripture, which clearly establishes the doctrine of predestination. We omit many passages usually quoted in this controversy; as that Jesus Christ said to his Father, *I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*, Matt. xi. 25. And this of St. Paul, *God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us to the adoption of sons*, Eph. i. 4 As this famous passage, *whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called*, Rom. viii. 28, 29.

We omit all these passages because our opponents dispute the sense we give of them, and because it is but justice either to hear and answer their objections (which the limits of these exercises will not allow) or not to make use of them, for that would be taking for granted what is not allowed, that is, that these passages speak of predestination in our sense of the term. Let us content ourselves, to oppose against the doctrine of prescience without predestination these three chapters in Romans, of which the text is the close.

I am aware of what is objected. It is said, that we make phantoms to combat, that the meaning of St Paul is clear, that the end he had in view puts the matter out of doubt, and that his end hath no relation to absolute decrees much less did he design to establish them. The apostle had laid down this position, that the gospel would hereafter be the only œcono-

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my of salvation, and consequently that an adherence to the levitical institution would be fatal. The Jews object to this, for they could not comprehend how an adherence to a divine institution could lead to perdition. St. Paul answers these complaints, by telling them that God had a right to annex his grace to what conditions he thought proper, and that the Jews, having rejected the Messiah, who brought salvation to them, had no reason to complain, because God had deprived them of a covenant, the conditions of which they had not performed. According to these divines this is all the mystery of these chapters, in which, say they, there is no trace of predestination.

But how can this be supposed to contain the whole design of the apostle? Suppose a Jew should appear in this auditory, and make these objections against us. You christians form an inconsistent idea of God. God said, the mosaical worship should be eternal: but you say, God hath abolished it. God said, *he that doth these things shall live by them:* but you say, that he who doth these things shall go into endless perdition for doing them. God said, the Messiah should come to the children of Abraham: but you say, he hath cast off the posterity of the patriarch, and made a covenant with pagan nations. Suppose a Jew to start these difficulties, and suppose we would wish simply to remove them, independently on the decrees we imagine in God, what should we say to this Jew? We should tell him first, that he had mistaken the sense of the law; and that the eternity promised to the levitical œconomy signified only a duration till the advent of the Messiah. Particularly, we should inform him, that his complaints against the Messiah were groundless. You complain, we should say, that God makes void his fidelity by abandoning you, but your complaint is unjust. God made a covenant with your fathers, he promised to bless their posterity, and engaged to send your Redeemer to bestow numberless benedictions and favours upon you. This Redeemer is come, he was born among you, in your nation, of a family in one of your own tribes: he began to discharge his office among you, and set salvation before you; you rejected him, you turned his doctrine into ridicule, you called him Beelzebub, you solicited his death, at length you crucified him, and since that you have persecuted him in his ministers and disciples. On the contrary, the Gentiles display his virtues, and they are prodigal of their blood to advance his glory. It is suprising, that God so dispenses his favours as to distin-

guish two nations so very different in the manner of their obedience to his authority?

Instead of this, what doth St. Paul? Here his answers. *Before the children were born, before they had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, he saith, the elder shall serve the younger. Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. The scripture saith to Pharoah, for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might make my power known. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Who art thou who repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Have not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour? What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known endures with much long suffering the vessels of wrath prepared to destruction?* Rom. ix. 11, &c. In all these answers St. Paul had recourse to the decrees of God. And one proof that this is the doctrine he intends to each the converted Jew, to whom he addresses himself, is, that this Jew makes some objections, which have no ground in the system we attack, but which are precisely the same that have been always urged against the doctrine of predestination. *Why doth ye yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?* Thus the system of prescience without predestination doth not agree with scripture.

We ask, thirdly, what is this system good for? Does it cast any light on the ways of providence? Does it fill up any of the depths, which absord our imperfect reason? In a word, is it not subject to the very same difficulties as that of predestination? These difficulties are the following, how could a God supremely good create men, who he knew must be some day infinitely miserable? How could a God infinitely holy permit sin to enter the world! How is it, that a God of infinite love to justice, doth not bestow on all mankind succour sufficient to render them perfectly holy? How came it to pass, that a God, who declares, he *would have all men to be saved*, did not reveal his will for the space of four thousand years to any but the single nation of the Jews? How is it, that at this present time he doth not extend our conquests to the ends of the earth, that we might carry thither the light of christianity, preach the gospel in idolatrous climes, and the mos-

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ques of Mohammed? How doth he afford life, and health, and strength, and courage, and opportunity to a creature, while he prosecutes black and horrible crimes, which make nature tremble? These are great difficulties in providence. Let any one inform us of a system without them, and we are ready to embrace it: but in the system now before us all these difficulties are contained, and should we grant its advocates all they require, they would be obliged however to exclaim with us on the borders of the ways of God, *O the depth!*

The third system is that of such divines as are called *Supralapsarians.* The word supralapsarian signifies above the fall, and these divines are so called because they so arrange the decrees of God as to go above the fall of man, as we are going to explain. Their grand principle is, that God made all things for his own glory; that his design in creating the universe was to manifest his perfections, and particularly his justice and his goodness; that for this purpose he created men with design that they should sin, in order that in the end he might appear infinitely good in pardoning some, and perfectly just in condemning others; so that God resolved to punish such and such persons not because he foresaw they would sin, but he resolved they should sin that he might damn them. This is their system in a few words. It is not that, which is generally received in our churches, but there have been many members and divines among us who adopted and defended it: but whatever veneration we profess for their memory, we ingeniously own, we cannot digest such consequences as seem to us necessarily to follow these positions. We will just mention the few difficulties following.

First, we demand an explanation of what they mean by this principle, *God hath made all things for his own glory.* If they mean, that justice requires a creature to devote himself to the worship and glorifying of his Creator, we freely grant it. If they mean that the attributes of God are displayed in all his works, we grant this too. But if this proposition be intended to affirm, that God had no other view in creating men, so to speak, than his own interest, we deny the proposition, and affirm that God created men for their own happiness, and in order to have subjects upon whom he might bestow favours.

We desire to be informed, in the next place, how it can be conceived, that a determination to damn millions of men

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can contribute *to the glory of God?* We easily conceive, that it is for the glory of divine justice to punish guilty men: but to resolve to damn men without the consideration of sin, to create them that they might sin, to determine that they should sin in order to their destruction is what seems to us more likely to tarnish the glory of God than to display it.

Thirdly, we demand, how according to this hypothesis it can be conceived that God is not the author of sin? In the general scheme of our churches, God only permits men to sin, and it is the abuse of liberty that plunges man into misery. Even this principle, all lenified as it seems, is yet subject to a great number of difficulties: but in this of our opponents, God wills sin to produce the end he proposed in creating the world, and it was necessary that men should sin; God created them for that. If this be not to constitute God the author of sin, we must renounce the most distinct and clear ideas.

Fourthly, we require them to reconcile this system with many express declarations of scripture, which informs us, that *God would have all men saved.* How doth it agree with such pressing intreaties, such cutting reproofs, such tender expostulation as God discovers in regard to the unconverted; *O that my people had hearkened unto me! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?* Matt. xxiii. 37.

Lastly, we desire to know, how it is possible to conceive a God, who, being in the actual enjoyment of perfect happiness, incomprehensible and supreme, could determine to add this degree though useless to his felicity, to create men without number for the purpose of confining them for ever in chains of darkness, and burning them for ever in unquenchable flames.

Such are the gulfs opened to us by these divines! As they conceive of the ways of God in a manner so much beyond comprehension, no people in the world have so much reason as they to exclaim, *O the depths! How unsearchable are the ways of God!* For my part, I own, I cannot enough wonder at men, who tell us in cool blood, that God created this universe on purpose to save one man; and to damn an hundred thousand; that neither sighs, nor prayers, nor tears, nor groans can revoke this decree; that we must submit to the sentence of a God, whose *glory* requires the creation of all these people for destruction? I say, I cannot sufficiently express

express my astonishment at seeing people maintain these propositions, with inflexibility and insensibility, without attempting to mitigate or limit the subject, yea, who tell us that all this is extremely plain and free from every difficulty, and that none of our objections deserve an answer.

Such being the difficulties of the several systems of the decrees of God, it should seem, there is but one part to take, and that is, to embrace the plan of our churches; for although it is evident by the reflections we have made, that the subject is obscure, yet it is that of all which is most conformable to the light of reason, and to the holy scriptures. We believe that God from a principle of goodness created mankind—that it was agreeable to his wisdom to form man free—that the root of mankind, Adam, our unhappy father, abused his liberty—that his descendants have added to their natural depravity, and to the sins of their ancestors, many crimes of their own—that a conduct so monstrous rendered parents and children worthy of eternal misery, so that without violating the laws of justice God might forever punish both—that having foreseen from all eternity these misfortunes, he resolved from all eternity to take from this unworthy mass of condemned creatures a certain number of men to be saved—that for them he sent his Son into the world—that he grants them his spirit to apply the benefits of the death of his Son—and that this spirit conducts them by the hearing of the word to sanctification, and from sanctification to eternal felicity. This in a few words is the system of our churches.

Hereupon, if you ask how it happens that two men to whom Christ is preached, the one receives and the other rejects him? We answer with St. Paul, this difference is, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand.* If you ask again whence comes this choice, how is it that God chooses to give his Spirit, and to display his mercy to one, and that he chooses to make the other a victim to his justice? We answer, *God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,* that is, leaveth him to his own insensibility. If you inquire further, how God can, without injuring his holiness, leave a man to his own hardness? We reply, that God is master of his creature, and that *the potter hath power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour.* If you still demand, what then is the use of our ministry, and what right hath God to complain

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that so many sinners persist in impenitence, since he hath resolved to leave them in it? To this we answer, *who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?*

After all these questions, should you appeal to our consciences to know whether our own answers fully satisfy ourselves; whether our arguments may not be turned against us; whether the objections we have made against others do not seem to conclude against ourselves; and whether the system we have proposed to you appear to ourselves free from difficulty; to this we reply by putting our finger upon our mouth: we acknowledge our ignorance: we cannot rend the vail under which God hath concealed his mysteries: we declare, that our end in choosing this subject was less to remove difficulties than to press them home, and by these means to make you feel the toleration which christians mutually owe one another on this article. It was with this view that we led you to the brink of this abyss of God, and endeavoured to engage you to exclaim here, as well as on the borders of other abysses, *O the depth, of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

So much for the *deep things of God* considered as objects astonishing and transporting the mind. Now let us consider them as objects productive of virtue and holiness. As the doctrine we have been establishing is most sublime in speculation, so is it most effectual in practice. Recall what we said on the darkness in which God conceals himself. Remember, this obscurity is every where mixed with light, a sort of twilight. There is obscurity in our natural ideas, obscurity in the works of nature, obscurity in the conduct of providence, obscurity in many doctrines of revelation. Amidst all this darkness, I discover one certain principle, one particle of pure light emitting brightness without obscurity, one truth which natural ideas, the whole creation, the ways of providence, and the language of revelation concur to teach us, that is, that a holy life is necessary.

We do not make this reflection by way of introducing scepticism, and to diminish the certainty of the doctrines, which it hath pleased God to reveal. Woe be to us, if while we labour with one hand to establish the foundations of religion, we endeavour to subvert them with the other! Far from us be those modern *Vaninis*, who, under pretence of making us consider the deity as covered with holy dark-

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ness, would persuade us that he is an inconsistent being, and that the religion he addresseth to us shocks reason, and is incompatible with itself. But whence is it, pray, that amidst all the obscurities that surround us, God hath placed practical duties in a light so remarkably clear? Whence is it that doctrines most clearly revealed are however so expressed as to furnish difficulties, if not substantial and real, yet likely and apparent: and that the practical part is so clearly revealed that it is not liable to any objections which have any shew or colour of argument? My brethren, either we must deny the wisdom of the Creator, or we must infer this consequence, that what is most necessary to be known, what will be most fatal to man to neglect, what we ought most inviolably to preserve is practical religion.

Let us apply this general reflection to the deep decrees of God. If the *foundation of God stands sure*, you can have no true joy or solid content, till you have each of you decided this great question; am I one of the *vessels of mercy decreed unto glory?* Or am I one of the *vessels of wrath fitting to destruction?* But how can I satisfy myself on this question at the same time so obscure and so important? The decree is impenetrable. The book of life is sealed. We have told you a thousand times, that there is no other way than by examining whether you bear the marks of election, and your whole vocation is to endeavour to acquire them. These characters, you know, are patience, gentleness, charity, humility, detachment from the world, and all other christian virtues. It belongs to you to exercise them. A little less speculation and more practice. Let us become less curious, and try to be more holy. Let us leave God to arrange his own decrees, and for our parts let us arrange our actions, and regulate our lives. Do not say, if I be predestinated to salvation I shall be saved without endeavouring. You would be wicked to make this objection, for although you are persuaded that your days are numbered, yet you do not omit to eat, and drink, and take care of your health. In this manner you should act in regard to your salvation.

And we, ministers of Jesus Christ, what is our duty? Why are we sent to this people? Is it to fathom the decrees of predestination and reprobation? As the Spirit of God hath revealed these mysteries, it is right to treat of them in the course of our ministry, and we should *think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think*, were we to suppress this part of religion. But after all, must we stop here?

Must this be the principal subject of our sermons? God forbid we should so ill understand the end of our ministry! I would as willingly see a physician, when he is consulted in a dangerous illness, employ himself in discoursing on the term of human life, haranguing his patient, telling him that his days are numbered, and that a hair of his head could not fall without the will of God. Unseasonable orator, leave talking, and go to work, consult the symptoms of my illness, call art and nature to my assistance, leave God to execute his own decrees, prescribe the remedies I must take, and the regimen I must follow, endeavour to strengthen this tottering body, and to retain my breath just ready to evaporate. Let us apply this image. Let us think of the account we must give to the master who sent us. Let us take care that he doth not say to us in the great day of judgment, get ye behind me ye refractory servants! I sent you to make the church holy, and not render it disputatious, to confirm my elect, and not to engage them in attempts to penetrate the mysteries of election, to announce my laws, and not to fathom my decrees.

But, not to confine ourselves to these general remarks, let us observe, that obscurity in regard to God affords powerful arguments against the rash divine, the indiscreet zealot, the timorous christian, and the worldly man attached to sensible objects.

This subject addresseth itself to you, rash divine, you who perplex your mind by trying to comprehend incomprehensible truths, to you whose audacious disposition obliges you to run into one of these two extremes, either to embrace error or to render truth doubtful by the manner of explaining it. For understand, my brethren, the man who rejects a truth because he cannot comprehend it, and he who would fully comprehend it before he receives it, both sin from the same principle, neither understands the limits of the human mind. These two extremes are alike dangerous. Certainly, on the one hand, we must be very rash, we must entertain very diminutive ideas of an infinite God, we must be very little versed in science to admit only principles which have no difficulty, and to regard the depth of a subject as a character of falsehood. What! A miserable creature, an ignorant creature, a creature that doth not know itself, would know the decrees of God, and reject them if they be unfathomable! But, on the other hand, we must have very narrow views, we must have a very weak mind, we must know

know very little of the designs of God, not to feel any difficulty, to find every thing clear, not to suspend our judgment upon any thing, to pretend not only to perceive the truth of a mystery, but to go to the bottom of it. Insignificant man! Feel thy diminutiveness. Cover thyself with dust, and learn of the greatest of divines to stop where you ought to stop, and to cry on the brink of the ocean, *O the depth!*

The deep things of God ought to confound the indiscreet zealot, who decrys and reviles all opinions different from his own though on matters in themselves dark and obscure. Here we pour our tears into the bosoms of our brethren of Augsburgh, some of whose teachers describe us in the most odious colours, dip their pen in gall when they write against us, tax us with making of the Deity a God cruel and barbarous, a God who is the author of sin, and who by his decrees countenances the depravity and immorality of mankind. You see, whether this be our doctrine. You see we join our voices with those of Seraphims, and make our assemblies resound with *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.* You see, we exhort our people to *enter in at the strait gate*, and to *work out their salvation with fear and trembling.* But, say you, do not the consequences we impute to you follow from your principles? To grant for a moment that they do follow, is it not sufficient that we disown and condemn them? Doth not such an answer from you concerning another doctrine satisfy us? Accuse us of being bad reasoners: but do not accuse us of being wicked men. Accuse us of reasoning inconclusively: but do not accuse us of exercising a faithless ministry. But, say you, you have divines among you, who poison controversy, who refute with bitterness, who excommunicate such as are not of their sentiments on predestination, and who, had they power equal to their will, would establish every opinion with fire and blood. Have we such divines? Ah! May God deliver us from them! They follow their own spirit, and not the spirit of our churches. Our churches never separate any person from their communion for not believing predestination. You know this by experience. Do we not open our arms to you? Do we not receive you into our communion? Have we not a sincere and ardent desire to be in union with you? O that God would hear our prayers! Spouse of Jesus Christ! O that God would put an end to the intestine wars that tear thee asunder! Children of the

reformation! O that you had but the wisdom to unite all your efforts againt the real enemy of the reformation, and of the reformed! This is our wish, and these shall incessantly be our prayers.

The depth of the ways of God may serve to reprove the timid and revolting christian; a character too common among us. Our faith forsakes us in our necessities; we lose the *sure anchor* of hope in a storm; we usually dash against rocks of adversity; we are confounded when we see those projects vanish, on the success of which we rested our happiness, and the prosperity of the church. My brethren, let us be more firm in our principles. Christian prudence indeed will oblige us to put our hand to every good work. We must be vigilant, assiduous, exact in our own affairs. In like manner in public dangers, we must assemble wise men, raise armies, and every one must endeavour to do what is in his power, and carry a stone toward the building of the temple: but when our designs fail, let us be steady, immoveable, unchangeable. Let us remember that we are only little children in comparison with the intelligence at the helm of the world: that God often allows us to use just and rational means, and at length frustrates all our designs in order to deliver us by unexpected methods, and to save us with more conspicuous power and glory.

When I am to penetrate this truth, I fix my eyes on the *great enemy* of religion. I see him at first equalling, yea, surpassing the most superb potentates, risen to a point of elevation astonishing to the whole world. His family numerous, his armies victorious, his territories extended far and wide at home and abroad. I see places conquered, battles won, and every blow aimed at his throne serving only to establish it. I see a servile idolatrous court elevating him above men, above heroes, and likening him to God himself. I see all parts of the world overwhelmed with his troops, your frontiers threatened, religion trembling, and the protestant world at the brink of ruin. At the sight of this tempest, I expect every moment to see the church expire, and I exclaim, O thou little boat driven with the wind, and battered in the storm! Are the waves going to swallow thee up? O church of Jesus Christ! *Against which the gates of hell were never to prevail*, are all thy hopes come to this! Behold Almighty God *makes bare his holy arm*, discovers himself amidst all this chaos, and overwhelms us with miracles

cles of love, after having humbled us by the darkness of his providence. Behold! in two campaigns* more than an hundred thousand enemies are either buried in the waves, or or killed by our troops, or trodden to death by our horse, or taken prisoners. Behold! Whole provinces yield to our arms. Behold! Our noble army covered with more laurels than we had ever seen before. Behold the fatal power, that was just now *exalted to heaven*, shaking, falling, and about to be *cast down to hell*. My brethren, let these events make us wise. Let us not judge of the conduct of God by our own ideas, but let us learn to respect the depths of his providence.

But what! Shall we always live in shades and darkness! Will there always be a vail between the porch and the sanctuary? Will God always lead us among chasms and gulfs! Ah! My brethren, these are precisely the ejaculations, these are the desires with which we would inspire you; and this we affirm, that the deep things of God expose the folly of a worldly man, who immoderately loves the present life. Presently this night, this dark night shall be at an end, presently we shall enter into that temple, *where there is no need of the sun, because the Lamb is the light thereof*, Rev. xxi. 23. Presently we shall arrive at that blessed period, when *that which is in part shall be done away*. In heaven we shall know all things. In heaven we shall understand nature, providence, grace, and glory. In heaven Jesus Christ will solve all our difficulties and objections. In heaven we shall see God *face to face*. O how will this knowledge fill us with joy! O how delightful will it be to derive knowledge and truth from their source! My soul, quit thy dust! Anticipate these periods of felicity, and say with Moses, *Lord shew me thy glory*! O Lord, dissipate the clouds and darkness that are around thy throne! O Lord, shorten the time that separates us! . . . *No man can see my face and live.* Well! Let us die then. Let us die to become immortal. Let us die to know God. Let us die to be *made partakers of the divine nature.* Happy to form such elevated wishes! Happier still to see them accomplished. Amen.

* Of Hochstet and Ramillies.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

THE SENTENCE PASSED UPON JUDAS BY JESUS CHRIST.

MATT. xxvi. 24.

The son of man goeth as it is written of him: but wo unto that man, by whom the son of man is betrayed: it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

THIS verse is part of a period beginning at the seventeenth, and ending with the twenty-fifth verse, in which the evangelist narrates two events, the last passover of Jesus Christ, and the treason of Judas. One of my colleagues will explain the other parts of this passage of sacred history, and I shall confine myself to this sentence of our Saviour against Judas, *It had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

This oracle is unequivocal. It conveys a most melancholy idea of the condition of the unhappy criminal. It should seem, Jesus Christ enveloped in qualified terms a truth the most dreadful imaginable. These words, *It had been good for that man, if he had not been born,* are equivalent to these, Judas is forever excluded from the happiness of heaven; Judas is forever condemned to the punishment of hell. It is the same truth, which the apostles expressed, after the example of their master, in milder terms, *Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether thou hast chosen Justus or Matthias, that he may take the part of this apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place,* Acts i. 24. 28. What is this *place?* The answer is easy, though some ancient heretics affirmed extravagant things about it. It is the place reserved for those, against whom the door of mercy is shut: it is the place reserved for those who must for ever serve for victims to divine justice. If

If you recal to mind all the most guilty persons, and those whose condition is the most desperate, you will not find one, of whom that can be said without rashness, which is here affirmed of Judas. Judas is the only person, literally the only person, whom we are allowed with certainty to declare is in the torments of hell. Certainly, we cannot help forming lamentable ideas of the condition of some sinners, who died in perpetrating their crimes; as of some who were less men than monsters of humanity, and who died blaspheming God, and attacking religion and morality, as Pharoah, Belshazzar, Julian, and others: but after all it is not for us to set limits to the mercy of God. The holy Spirit hath ways unknown to us to convert the hearts of men. Judas is the only one without exception, of whom I dare venture to affirm, *he is irrecoverably lost.* And when I form this judgment of his destiny, I do not ground it merely on his betraying Jesus Christ; for it is not impossible, that after he had committed that crime he might have obtained forgiveness by repentance. I do not ground it on the manner of his death, for he was distracted, and madness is sometimes caused by trouble, and in such a case reason hath no share, and divine justice doth not impute sin to a man deprived of his senses. I ground my judgment of the punishment of Judas on the words of my text, *It had been good for that man, if he had not been born;* words never denounced by the Spirit of God against any other wretch that ever was. Thus the object, which I exhibit to your view to day, is not only a particular object, but it is even an unique, a sole, a single object.

But perhaps because it is a singular case, you think it does not regard you, and that you need not make any inferences concerning your own eternal destiny from it. And does not this object regard you! Alas! My brethren, I dare not ....: but however hear me; condescend to accompany me in this mortifying and (I must tell you, how improper soever it may seem to conciliate your attention) deign to accompany us in this alarming meditation. Come and examine what a melancholy likeness there is between the features of some of our hearers, and those of the miserable Judas. How like are their dispositions! How sad soever the examination may be, there is at least one comfortable consideration, at least one difference between them and this traitor, that is, Jesus Christ hath pronounced the decree of his condemnation, whereas he hath not yet pronounced the sentence on my hearers;

hearers; the door of mercy is yet open to them, the time of their visitation is not yet quite expired. O that they would avail themselves of the few inestimable moments that remain! O that they would throw themselves at the feet of that Jesus, whom they have so often betrayed! O that they may be *washed in* that *blood*, which they have so unworthily *trodden under foot!* God Almighty grant, for his great mercy's sake, that this may be the effect of this discourse! Grant, O God, that such of us as are best established in piety may be filled with holy fear, by seeing to what excess self-interest may be carried! *O Lord, incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.* Amen.

It had been good for that man, if he had not been born, or what is the same thing in this place, *If he had never existed, and were not to exist any longer.* Let us first explain the meaning of Jesus Christ by a few reflections, and justify the idea I have given you of the words.

1. Existence is the foundation of happiness and misery. Nothing hath no properties. Not to exist is to be neither happy nor miserable. To exist is to be capable of one, or the other, or both together. Existence considered in itself is indifferent to the being existing, it is the happiness, or the misery with which it is accompanied, which determines the value of it. If it were possible for a man to exist without being either happy or miserable, his existence would be in some sort useless and indifferent, and it would be true in regard to him, that it would be neither good nor evil to him to be born, or not to be born. If the existence of a man be accompanied with equal degrees of happiness and misery, we must form the same judgment; misery is compensated by happiness, and happiness by misery; the balance is equal, and preponderates neither way. If there be more happiness than misery in his existence, it is true in regard to him, that it is better for him to be than not to be: on the contrary, if misery exceed happiness.... finish this proposition yourselves, and apply it to the subject in hand. *It had been good for Judas, if he had not been born.* So Jesus Christ declares. The existence of Judas then must be attended with more misery than happiness. This is our first reflection.

2. To judge whether a man be happy or miserable, whether it be better for him to exist, or not to exist, we must not consider him in regard to a few moments, but in the

whole of his existence: we must examine whether, all things considered, good be greater than evil, or evil greater than good, The good and ills of past life generally leave no impression on our minds, they contribute only to our present happiness or misery, and there remains nothing but a remembrance of them. If you judge of the happiness or misery of man by his actual condition, you will say in each moment of his happiness, it is better for him to be than not to be; and during every moment of his misery, you will say it is better for him not to exist than to exist. But, as I said before, it is not in regard to a single instant that a man ought to be considered, to determine whether he be happy or miserable; it is in the whole of his existence.

I make this reflection to prevent your supposing that when Jesus Christ said, *It had been good for Judas, if he had not been born*, he meant Judas should be annihilated. Had Judas been annihilated after death, it must be said, according to our first proposition, that Judas after death would not be either happy or miserable; that it would not have been either good or evil for him to be born, or not to be born. In this case, to form a just idea of the value of the existence of Judas, it would be necessary to compare the misery of his end with the happiness of his life, and as we have no reason to think he had been more miserable than happy in his life, as we have reason to presume, on the contrary, that having been in a middling state of life he had enjoyed the gifts of nature with some kind of tranquillity, it could not be affirmed, strictly speaking, that because he died a violent death, *it had been good for him, if he had not been born.* The death of Judas separated from its consequences was not more miserable than that of a man, who dies in his bed after lying ill some days; and as we cannot affirm of a man, who after enjoying a tranquil life dies by an illness of some days, that *it had been good for that man, if he had not been born*, so neither can we affirm of Judas, if he had been annihilated after death. When Jesus Christ says, *it had been good for that man if he had not been born*, he supposes, he would subsist after death. He compares the condition he would be in after death with all the good he had enjoyed, and would enjoy during life; and by thus forming his judgment on the whole of existence, he determines that the existence of this traitor would be accompanied with more evil than good, and he pronounces, *it would have been good for that man if he had not been born*, that is to say,

say, if he *never had existed*, and if he *never were to exist* any longer. This is our second reflection.

3. Whatever misfortunes attend the present life, there are few men, who, all things considered, would not rather choose to live for ever as we live in this world than to be annihilated after living a few years. I do not inquire whether their choice be good; I only say it is their choice, the fact is incontestable. If few men be of the mind of Mecænas, who said, "Let me suffer, let me be despised and miserable, yet I would rather exist than not exist," if there be, I say, few men of the opinion of this favourite of Augustus, there are few also, who adopt the sentiment of the wise man, or shall I say of the fool? (for there is some reason to doubt, whether it be the language of Solomon or the fool introduced in the book) *I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive; yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been*, Eccles. iv. 2, 3. To consider things as they usually are, whatever misfortunes attend life, mankind prefer life before annihilation. Whether their taste be good or bad, we do not inquire now, we speak of a fact, and the fact is indisputable. Jesus Christ speaks to men, he supposes their ideas to be what they are, and he speaks according to these ideas. When he says, *it had been good for Judas, if he had not been born*, he means that his misery would be greater after death than it had been during his life; for how disgusting soever life may be, mankind prefer it before annihilation; and if Judas had no other punishment to suffer for his perfidy than such as belonged to the present state, Jesus Christ would not have said, *it had been good for that man, if he had not been born*. He intended we should understand that Judas would be more miserable in a future œconomy, than we are in this life, in spite of the maladies to which our frailty exposes us, in spite of the vicissitudes we experience, and in spite of the sacrifices, which we are daily required to make.

4. If, as we said at first, the sentence of Jesus Christ against Judas be expressed in mild terms, we must, in order fully to comprehend the sense, lay aside the soft language, and advert to the terrible subject. But can we without rashness change the terms of a sentence, which the Saviour pronounced, and give the whole of what he spoke only in part? Yes, provided the part we add be taken not from our own systems, but from that of Jesus Christ, who only can

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But if every place in hell be intolerable, some are more so than others. When, by following the genius of the gospel, you examine for whom divine justice reserves the most dreadful punishments, you easily conceive it is for such men as Judas, and you will agree (without our staying now to prove it) that as Jesus Christ denounced the worst kind of punishment against him, so he doomed him to suffer the greatest degree of that kind of punishment.

In fine, our last remark on the words of Jesus Christ is, that when he said, *it had been good for that man, if he had not been born* or *had he never existed*, he supposed not only that the punishment of Judas did not exist in annihilation, but that it would not be in his power not to exist. He supposed that Judas was not master of his own existence, and that it did not depend on him to continue or to put an

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it, as he should think proper. Existence considered in
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know what is intended by the *star* mentioned in
nth chapter of Revelation. St. John represents it as *falling from heaven unto the earth*, as having *the key of the bottomless pit*, as causing a *smoke to arise* by which the *sun and* the *air* were *darkened*, and out of which came *locusts upon the earth*. But I am persuaded, that in a system of irreligion nothing can be imagined more dreadful than the miseries, which the holy Spirit here saith these infernal locusts inflict upon mankind. These were commanded *not to kill*, but to *torment five months* such men as *had not the seal of God in their foreheads*. And *in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them*. It is a miserable relief, I grant, to destroy ones self to avoid divine punishment, But doth death put an end to our existence? Is a sinner less in the hand of God in the grave, than he is during this life? *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Psal. cxxxix. 7.

What misery in the eyes of an irreligious man to be tormented through life, and to be deprived of a relief, which the wretched almost always have in view, I mean death! For how many ways are there of getting rid of life? And to what degree of impotence must he be reduced who is not able by any means to put an end to life; *In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

But if the greatest misery in the account of an irreligious man be not to have the power of getting rid of the troubles

of

of a few years by destroying himself, what will be the state of the damned to see themselves under a fatal necessity of existing for ever, and of not having the power of terminating their existence, and of sinking into nothing? What despairing and cruel complaints will this necessity of existing cause? In vain will they seek refuge in *dens* and chasms of the earth! in vain will they implore *mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them!* In vain will they *curse the day*, and execrate *the night of their birth!* They will be obliged to exist, because Almighty God will refuse them that act of omnipotence, without which they cannot be annihilated.

Such will be the misery of the damned, and such is the extreme misery, to which Jesus Christ adjudges Judas. But this man, you will say, had a dark perfidious soul, he was a traitor, he had the infamy to betray his Saviour, and to sell him for thirty pieces of silver; this man was such a monster as nature hardly produces in many centuries. My brethren, I am come now to the most odious but most necessary part of my discourse. I must enter on the mortifying task of examining whether there be any resemblance between some of this assembly and the unhappy Judas. What a task to perform in such an auditory as this! What a gospel to preach to christians! What murmurs are we going to excite in this assembly! *The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay*, Jer. xx. 8, 9.

Do not think that I intend to conclude my discourse by abusing the liberty given me of speaking in this pulpit, by attempting to make an ingenious essay on a subject the most grave and solemn; be not afraid of my extenuating the crimes of Judas, and exaggerating yours. How it is possible to extenuate the crimes of Judas? When I represent to myself a man, whom the Saviour distinguished in a manner so remarkable, a man who travelled with him, a man to whom he not only revealed the mysteries of his kingdom, but whom he associated with himself to teach them to the world, to subvert the empire of satan and set his captives free, and to preach this gospel, *lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Sell that you have, and give alms, provide yourselves bags that*

wax

wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, Matt. vi. 19, &c. Luke xii. 33. When I consider this man freely opening his heart to the demon of avarice, parleying with the most obstinate enemies of his divine master, proposing to deliver him up to their barbarity, agreeing on the price of treason, executing the horrible stipulation, coming at the head of the most vile and infamous mob that ever was, giving the fatal signal to his unworthy companions, kissing Jesus Christ and saying while he saluted him, *hail master*; when I consider this abominable man, far from attempting to extenuate his crime, I can find no colours dismal enough to describe it. No: I tremble at the bare idea of this monster, and involuntarily exclaim, *O execrable love of money! To what will thou not impel the hearts of men* !*

But does this odious picture resemble none but Judas? Ah! When I imagine a christian born in this age of knowledge, a christian with the gospel in his hand, convinced of the truth and beauty of religion, a christian, communicant at the table of Jesus Christ, who hath vowed a hundred times an eternal obedience to God, and hath *tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come:* when I consider this christian full of contrivances, intriguing in certain circles, exposing to the world a spectacle of immodesty, resisting the ministry, exclaiming against such religious discourses as his depravity forbids him to obey; or, to confine myself to the disposition of Judas, when I observe this christian like Judas possessed with the demon of avarice, hardening his heart against the cries of the wretched, pillaging the widow and the fatherless of their daily bread, selling his own soul and the souls of his children rather than break through a papal interdict, rather than quit a country where truth is hated and persecuted, where there is no public worship during life, no consolations at the hour of death: when I consider such christians, I protest, I almost pity Judas, and turn all my indignation against them.

My brethren, I said, and I repeat it again, the task is mortifying, the matter is offensive, but I must come to it, *if I seek to please men, I shall not be the servant of Christ.* Let us lay aside vague ideas, and let us enter on some detail. Let us describe Judas, but let us not forget ourselves, too much resembling this ugly man. Let us examine, first, the passion that governed him—next the crime to which it impelled

* Quid non mortalia, &c. Virg. Æneid. L. 3.

pelled him—then the circumstances in which he committed it—fourthly the pretexts with which he covered it—and finally the confession he was compelled to make.

1. What *passion* governed Judas? Every one knows, it was *avarice*. Which of us is given up to this passion? Rather which of us is free from it?

Avarice may be considered in two different points of light. It may be considered in those men, or rather those public bloodsuckers, or, as the officers of the Roman empire Vespasian were called, those *sponges* of society, who infatuated with this passion seek after riches as the supreme good, determine to acquire it by any methods, and consider the ways that lead to wealth legal or illegal as the only road for them to travel. Let the laws be violated, let the people be oppressed, let equity be subverted, let a kingdom be sacrificed to their irresistible passion for wealth, let it be across a thousand depopulated countries, a thousand ruined families, let it be over a thousand piles of mangled carcases that they arrive at fortune, provided they can but acquire it, no matter what it costs.

This is our first notion of avarice. But in this point of light who of us hath this passion? Nobody, not one person, I except none. I leave to the searcher of hearts to determine whether it be the vehemence of our piety, or the impotence of our condition, that prevents our carrying avarice to this length; whether it be respect for the laws, or dread of them, that keeps us from violating them; whether we abstain from oppressing mankind because we love, or because we fear them; whether sacrificing our country to our love of wealth be prevented by our love to our country, or by a despair of success. Yes, I leave the decision of this question to the searcher of hearts. I would as far as I can without betraying my ministry, form the most favourable judgment of my hearers; therefore I affirm not one of us is avaricious in this first sense.

Avarice, however, must be considered in a second point of light. It not only consists in committing bold crimes, but in entertaining mean ideas, and practising low methods, incompatible with such magnanimity as our condition ought to inspire. It consists not only in an intire renunciation of the *kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*, but in not *seeking it first*, in the manner proposed. It consists not only in always endeavouring to increase our wealth, but in harbouring continual fears of losing it, and perplexing ourselves

selves in endless methods of preserving it. It consists not only in wholly withholding from the poor but in giving through restraint, and in always fearing to give too much. It consists not only in omitting to serve God, but in trying to associate the service of God with that of mammon. Which of us is free from avarice considered in this second point of light? Strictly speaking, nobody, no not one person.

2. But what right have we to pronounce that no one is defiled with avarice considered in the first point of light? Let us consider this passion in regard to the odious *crimes*, which it impels us to commit. Let us review the articles just now mentioned. Are we guilty of only trying to associate God and mammon? And do we never lay aside the service of God wholly, when it clashes with that of mammon? Are we guilty of nothing more than giving through constraint, do we not often avoid giving at all, do we not always omit charity when we can do so without being branded with infamy? Are we to blame only for fearing to lose our wealth, are we not also always occupied about increasing it, so that this desire follows us every where, through all the tumults of the day and all the silence of the night, into every company, into private prayer and public devotion? Are we guilty of only not *seeking first the kingdom of God*, are we not also ready to renounce it, when we cannot enter it without losing some of our wealth? Are we guilty of violating only the laws of charity, do we not also violate those of equity? By what unheard of secret then have some of us so rapidly acquired large fortunes? What sudden revolution then hath so quickly changed the appearance of some families? What remarkable providence then hath made such an extreme difference between your ancestry and your posterity? What motive then retains so many of our protestant brethren in their native country, and why are there in this assembly so many dismembered families? Why are not children with their parents, and parents with their children in this free country, both content to have their *lives for a prey?* Ah! my brethren, what a scandalous history is that of Judas! What a horrible crime did his avarice impel him to commit! And also what a sad resemblance is there between that wretch and some christians, who profess to abhor him!

3. As the avarice of Judas appears odious considered in itself, and more so considered in regard to the crime he com-

mitted through it, so it will appear more offensive still, if you consider it in view of the *circumstances* in which he was, when he gave himself up to it: for how far soever the wickedest of men be from the practice of some virtues, there are occasions on which they seem to turn their attention to them. The most barbarous souls cannot help relenting, when they see the objects of their hatred reduced to extreme misery. Hearts the most lukewarm towards religion feel I know not what emotions of piety, when religion is exhibited in some eminent points of light, and when the love of God to his creatures, and his compassion for sinners are described in lively colours.

On this principle, what opinion must we form of Judas? What a time did he choose to betray his master to his enemies, and to give himself up to Satan? Jesus Christ was eating the passover with his disciples and telling them, *with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.* Jesus Christ was taking leave of his disciples at a love feast, and going as soon as the company broke up to substantiate the shadow exhibited in the paschal supper, by offering himself in their stead a sacrifice for sin. Judas partook of this paschal lamb, and sat at the table with Jesus Christ at this feast of love, yet in these circumstances so proper to eradicate avarice, at least to suspend the growth of it, it became more vigorous, and ripened in his unworthy soul.

My brethren, when we judge our own hearts, let us keep this principle in view. A passion hateful in itself, and hateful on account of the crimes it makes us commit, may become more so by circumstances. What is an innocent freedom in some circumstances may become licentiousness in other circumstances, and as circumstances alter what is licentious may become a great crime; and thus an innocent freedom, at most an act of licentiousness, at most a crime, may become an atrocious outrage, and unpardonable on account of circumstances in which it was committed. This maxim is self-evident, it is an axiom of morality.

O God, judge of the whole earth, do not pass sentence on this assembly according to the rigour of this maxim! This is passion week, and we are in circumstances, in which Jesus Christ most powerfully attacks our vices. You need not be a saint to have emotions of piety in these circumstances, it is sufficient to be a man: but you must be a monster, a disciple of Judas, to have none. To hate in these circumstances,

stances, to hate when Jesus Christ loves, and while he is saying of his executioners, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* To shut our hearts against the cries of our wretched fellow creatures, while Jesus Christ is *pouring out* his blood, his life, his *soul* for poor mortals; to give ourselves up to worldly pleasure, while nothing is treated of among us but the sufferings of Jesus Christ, while he is represented as sweating great drops of blood, contending with divine justice, fastening to a cross, and uttering these lamentable complaints, *my soul is exceeding sorrowful, very heavy, sorrowful even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* At such a time, and in such circumstances to pursue worldly pleasures. . . . . My brethren, finish this article yourselves, and pronounce your own sentences.

4. Consider the *pretexts*, with which Judas covered his avarice. One of the principle causes of our indignation at irregularities of our neighbours, and our indulgence for our own, is, that we see the first without the colourings, which they who commit them make use of to conceal their turpitude from themselves, whereas we always consider our own through such mediums as decorate and disguise them. Now as we palliate our own passions, we ought to believe, that other people palliate theirs.

Who can imagine that Judas considered his crime in its own real horrid colours? Can any body suppose he said to himself, "I am determined to violate the most solemn obligations for thirty pieces of silver: I am resolved to betray the Saviour of the world for thirty pieces of silver: I would rather see him crucified than be deprived of this unworthy price of treason: this contemptible reward I prefer before all the joys of heaven?" No, no, Judas did not reason thus. Judge what he did on this occasion by what he did on another. A woman poured a box of costly ointment on the feet of Jesus Christ; Judas was hurt to see this prey escape his avarice, he therefore covered the sordid disposition of his soul with the goodly pretence of charity, *this ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor*, John xii. 4—6. Thus in the present case, "perhaps Jesus Christ will escape from his enemies, as he has often done before. Perhaps his looks will deter them. Perhaps he will fell them to the earth with his power. Perhaps the angels of heaven will surround, protect and defend

him. Perhaps I myself shall contribute to save the world by offering the sacrifice that is to procure salvation. Perhaps, too, I may have formed ideas too high of this Jesus. Perhaps God doth not interest himself in his preservation, as I have hitherto supposed. Perhaps he hath assumed a character which doth not belong to him, and is nothing but a phantom of a Messiah. (Who can tell what extravagant reasonings may be formed by a mind given up to a passion, and determined to justify it?) After all, should I add one more crime to what I have already committed, the number will not be so very great. The blood I am going to assist in shedding will obtain my pardon for contributing to shed it. And I cannot persuade myself that a Saviour, who came into the world on purpose to publish a general pardon to all sinners, will choose to make an exception against me, me alone!"

Brethren, is this source of sophistry closed in regard to you? If I may venture to speak so, did the logic of your passions expire when Judas died? Which of us is not, so to speak, two different yea opposite men according to the agitation of our spirits, and the dominion of our passions? Let any one of us be consulted concerning a crime, which we have no interest in committing or palliating, and we shall talk of nothing but equity, rectitude, and religion: but let us be questioned concerning the same crime, when we have some interest in the commission of it, and behold! another language, another morality, another religion, or to say all in one word, behold another man!

To come to the point, under what pretexts doth no avarice conceal itself? How many forms doth it take to disguise itself from the man who is guilty of it, and who will be drenched in the guilt of it till the day he dies! Sometimes it is prudence, which requires him to provide not only for his present wants but for such as he may have in future. Sometimes it is charity, which requires him not to give society examples of prodigality and parade. Sometimes it is parental love obliging him to save something for his children. Sometimes it is circumspection, which requires him not to supply people, who make an ill use of what they get. Sometimes it is necessity, which obliges him to repel artifice by artifice. Sometimes it is good conscience, which convinces him, good man, that he hath already exceeded in compassion and alms giving, and done too much. Sometimes it is equity, for justice requires that every one should enjoy

enjoy the fruit of his own labours, and those of his ancestors. Sometimes it is incompetence, perhaps indeed a little part of my wealth may be subject to some scruples, for who can assure himself that every farthing of his fortune hath been acquired with the most strict regard to evangelical rectitude, but then I cannot tell to whom this restitution should be made, and till that is made justice is not satisfied, there is no room for generosity. Sometimes . . . . what am I about, who can make a complete list of all the pretences, with which a miser disguises himself in his own eyes, and imagines he can disguise himself in the eyes of others!

5. Finally let us consider the *confession*, which the truth forced from Judas in spite of his reigning passion, and in the same article let us observe the remorse inspired by his passion, and the reparation his remorse compelled him to make. Presently I see the unhappy Judas recover himself from his infatuation. Presently he sees through the pretexts, which for a while disguised his passion, and concealed the horror of the crime he was going to commit. Presently I hear him say, *I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood*, Matt. xxvii. 4. See, he hates the abominable thirty pieces of silver, the charm of which had allured him to commit the blackest crime, and to plunge himself into the deepest woe, see, he casts down the pieces of silver at the feet of those, of whom he received them.

Christians, blush! Here the comparison of Judas with some christians is greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. I am aware, that the confession of Judas was not sanctified by faith, and that the restitution proceeded more from despair than true repentance, however he did repent, he did say *I have sinned*, and he did restore the thirty pieces of silver, which he had so basely acquired.

But where are the christians, who repent of the extortions, of which their avarice hath caused them to be guilty? Where are christians saying, *I have sinned?* Particularly, where are those christians, who have made restitution? It is said, there are some. I believe so, because credible people affirm it. But I declare solemnly I have never seen one, and yet I have seen many people, whose hands were defiled with the *accursed thing* whose magnificence and pomp were the fruit of the cursed thing. Extortioners of this kind I have never seen, I have never seen one of them repenting, and saying, *indeed I have sinned, and thus and thus have I done.*

done. I have never seen one, who hath not invented as many pretexts to keep his ill-gotten wealth as he had invented to get it. In one word, I never saw one, who understood, or was willing to learn the elements of christian morality on the doctrine of restitution. How rare soever the conversion of sinners of other kinds may be, thanks to divine mercy, we have sometimes seen edifying examples of such conversions. We have seen voluptuous people groan at the recollection of their former debaucheries, efface the dissipations of their youth by the penitential grief, and pious actions of their mature age, and affix that body in a mortal illness to the cross of Christ, which during health and strength they had devoted to luxury. We have seen assassins ready if it were possible to replace the blood they had shed with their own. We have seen vindictive people embrace inveterate enemies, and cover them with affectionate tears. But among that great number of dying people, who, we know with the utmost certainty, had become rich by oblique means; among the great number of soldiers and officers, who had robbed, plundered and sacked; among the great number of merchants and tradesmen, who had been guilty of falsehood, deceit, cheating and perjury, and who by such means had acquired a splendid fortune; among all this great number we have never seen one, who had the resolution to assemble his family round his dying bed, and take his leave of them in this manner. "My dear children, I have been a scandal to you through life, I will not edify you by my death. I am determined in these last moments of my life to give glory to God by acknowledging my past transgressions. The greatest part of my fortune was acquired by artful and wicked means. These elegant apartments are furnished with my oaths and perjuries. This strong and well finished house is founded on my treachery. My sumptuous and fashionable equipage is the produce of my extortions. But I repent now of my sins. I make restitution to church and state, to the public and individuals. I choose rather to bequeath poverty to you than to leave you a patrimony under a curse. You will gain more by the example I give you of repentance than you would by all my unjust acquisitions." An age, a whole century, doth it furnish one such example?

Such is the face of mankind! Such the condition of the church! And what dreadful discoveries should we now make could we look into futurity as easily as we can examine

amine the present and the past! When Jesus Christ, that good master, uttered this painful prophesy to his family sitting round him, *verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me*, all his disciples *were exceeding sorrowful*, and every one said unto him, *Lord, is it I?* How many subjects for grief would rise to view, should God draw aside the vail that hides the destiny of all this assembly, and shew us the bottomless abyss, into which the love of money will plunge many who are present!

Let us prevent this great evil. Let us purify the spring from whence our actions and their consequences flow. Let us examine this idol, to which we sacrifice our all. Judge of the value of riches in pursuit of which we are so eager, by the brevity of life. The best course of moral instruction against the passions is death. The grave is a discoverer of the absurdidy of sin of every kind. There the ambitious may learn the folly of ambition. There the vain may learn the vanity of all human things. There the voluptuous may read a mortifying lesson on the absurdity of sensual pleasure. But this school, fruitful in instructions that concern all the passions, is profusely eloquent against avarice. I recollect an anecdote of Constantine the Great. In order to reclaim a miser, he took a lance, and marked out a space of ground of the size of a human body, and told him, "add heap to heap, accumulate riches upon riches, extend the bounds of your possessions, conquer the whole world, in a few days such a spot as this will be all you will have." I take this spear, my brethren, I mark out this space, among you, in a few days you will be worth no more than this. Go to the tomb of the avaricious man, go down and see his coffin and his shroud, in four days these will be all you will have.

I conclude, and I only add one word of Jesus Christ. Our divine Saviour describes a man revolving in his mind great projects, thinking of nothing but pulling down and rebuilding, dying the same night, void, destitute, miserable, and terrified at seeing all his fancied projects of felicity vanish; on which our Lord makes this reflection, *so is every one, who layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God*, Luke xii. 21. My God! how poor is he, though among piles of gold and silver, amidst all riches and plenty, who is not *rich toward God!* On the contrary, how enviable is the condition of a man hungry, indigent and wrapped in rags, if he be *rich toward God!* Rich men! This is the only way

way to sanctify your riches. Be *rich toward God.* Ye poor people! this is all you want to support you under poverty, and to enable you to triumph even in your indigence. May we all be *rich toward God*! Let us all accumulate a treasure of good works, it is the most substantial wealth, and that only which will yield a bountiful harvest at last. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased,* Psal. iv. 6, 7. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

THE CAUSE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.

HOSEA xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.

THESE words are so concise in the Hebrew text that no distinct idea can be affixed to them, unless we supply something. All expositors allow this. The only question is, what word ought to be supplied to express the prophet's meaning.

Some supply, *thine idols*, or *thy calves*, have destroyed thee: and by these they understand the images, which Jeroboam placed at Samaria to prevent the ten tribes, who had revolted under his direction from the government of Rehoboam, from returning to that prince, as probably they might have been tempted to do, had they gone to worship the true God at Jerusalem.

Others supply, *thy king*, hath destroyed thee, O Israel, meaning Jeroboam, who had led the people of Israel into idolatry.

But, not to trouble you with a list of the various opinions of expositors, I shall content myself with observing that, which I think best founded, that is, the sense given by the ancient Latin version, *Thy destruction is of thyself, O Israel*, or *thou art the author of thine own ruin*. This translation, which supplies less to the original, is also perfectly agreeable to the idiom of the Hebrew language. With this the version of our churches agrees, *thou hast destroyed*

thyself, or *thou art destroyed*, which is much the same, because others cannot destroy us unless we contribute by our own negligence to our own destruction. This translation too is connected with what precedes, and what follows, and in general with the chief design of our prophet.

This chief design is very observable in most chapters of this prophecy. It is evident, the prophet intended to convince the Israelites, that God had discovered in all his dispensations a desire to fix them in his service, to lead them to felicity by the path of virtue, and that they ought to blame none but themselves if judgments from heaven should overwhelm them, giving them up to the Assyrians in this life, and to punishment after death. This design seems to me most fully discovered in the latter part of this chapter, a few verses after the text, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction.* You know, my brethren, St. Paul informs us, that this promise will not be accomplished till after the general resurrection, *Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* But, adds our prophet, *Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God.* The text is therefore connected with the foregoing and following words according to this translation, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.*

I class the text then among these passages of scripture, in which God condescends to exonerate his conduct in regard to sinners by declaring, that they ought to take the whole blame of their own destruction on themselves; and in this point of view I am going to consider it. The difficulties of this subject chiefly proceed from three causes, either from our notion of the nature of God—or the nature of religion—or the nature of man. We will examine these difficulties, and endeavour to remove them in the remaining part of this discourse.

I. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.* The first difficulties, that seem to belong to this truth, are taken from the *nature of God*, who, having created nothing of which he had not an idea before, and having realized no idea all the consequences of which he had not foreseen, is the author not only of every being that exists, but also of every thing

thing that results from their existence, and seems for this very reason the only cause of the miseries of his creatures.

It is much to be wished, my brethren, that mankind were so apprized of the narrow limits of their own understandings as not to plunge themselves into some deep subjects, which they are incapable of fathoming, and so as to attribute to their natural incapacity their incompetency to answer some objections against the perfections of God. Some pagans have been more aware of this than many christians, and the Persians, followers of Mohammed, have endeavoured to make their disciples comprehend it by an ingenious fable.

" There were, say they, three brethren, who all died at the same time; the two first were far advanced in age; the elder had always lived in a habit of obedience to God, the second on the contrary in a course of disobedience and sin, and the third was an infant incapable of distinguishing good from evil. These three brothers appeared before the tribunal of God, the first was received into paradise, the second was condemned to hell, the third was sent to a middle place, where there was neither pleasure nor pain, because he had not done either good or evil. When this youngest heard his sentence, and the reason on which the Supreme Judge grounded it, sorry to be excluded from paradise, he exclaimed, Ah, Lord! hadst thou preserved my life as thou didst that of my good brother, how much better, would it have been for me? I should have lived as he did, and then I should have enjoyed as he does the happiness of eternal glory! My child, replied God to him, I knew thee, and I knew, hadst thou lived longer thou wouldst have lived like thy wicked brother, and like him wouldst have rendered thyself deserving of the punishment of hell. The condemned brother, hearing this discourse of God, exclaimed, Ah, Lord! why didst thou not then confer the same favour upon me as upon my younger brother, by depriving me of a life, which I have so wickedly mis-spent as to bring myself under a sentence of condemnation? I preserved thy life, said God, to give thee an opportunity of saving thyself. The younger brother, hearing this reply, exclaimed again, Ah! why then, my God, didst thou not preserve my life also that I might have had an opportunity of saving myself? God, to put an end to complaining and disputing, replied, because my decree had determined otherways*.

* Voyag. de M. Chardin, tom. vii. pag. 33.

Were I to follow my own inclination, I should imitate this cautious reserve: but as silence on this subject is sometimes an occasion of imaginary triumph to the enemies of religion, and as it sometimes causes scruples in weak consciences, I think it absolutely necessary to say something toward removing this objection, and to prove, at least, that though we are incapable of fully satisfying ourselves on this subject, yet there is nothing in this incompetency favourable to the insults of infidels, or the doubts and fears of the scrupulous.

Now, my brethren, it seems to me, we cannot possibly imagine any more than two ways to satisfy ourselves on this subject: the one is to obtain a complete idea of the decrees of God, and to compare them so exactly with the dispositions of sinners as to make it evident by this comparison, that sinners are not under a necessity of committing such crimes, as cause their eternal destruction. The second is, to refer the subject to the determination of a being of the most unsuspected knowledge and veracity, whose testimony we may persuade ourselves is unexceptionable, and whose declaration is an infallible oracle.

The first of these ways is impracticale. To be able to demonstrate, by an exact comparison of the decrees of God with the nature of man, that sinners are not necessitated to to commit such crimes as cause their eternal destruction, is, in my opinion, a work more than human. Many have attempted it, but though we cannot refuse the praise due to their piety, yet, it should seem, we owe this testimony to truth, that they have not removed all the objections to which the subject is liable.

I say more, I venture to predict, without pretending to be a prophet, that all future efforts will be equally unsuccessful. The reason is, because it is an attempt to infer consequences from principles unknown. Who can boast of knowing the whole arrangement, all the extent, and all the combinations of the decrees of God? The depth of these decrees, the obscure manner in which the scripture expresses them, and if I may be allowed to say so, the darkness in which attempts to elucidate them have involved them, place them infinitely beyond our reach. As this method hath been impracticable to this day, probably it will continue so to the end of the world.

Let us try the second. The question is whether, allowing the decrees of God, God doth any violence to sinners compelling

compelling them to commit sin? Hath not this question been fully answered by a being, whose decisions are infallible oracles, and of whose testimony we cannot possibly form any reasonable doubt? Yes, my brethren, we know such a being; we know a being infinitely capable of deciding this question, and who hath actually decided it. This being is God himself.

To explain our meaning, and to shew the connection of the answer with the question, I will suppose you to put up this petition to God. Doth the eternal destination, which thou hast made of my soul before I had a being, force my will; do what they call predestination and reprobation in the schools destroy this propostion, that if I perish, my destruction proceeds alone from myself? My God, remove this difficulty, and lay open to me this important truth. I suppose, my brethren, you have presented this question, and that God answers in the following manner. The frailty of your minds renders this matter incomprehensible to you, It is impossible for men finite as you are to comprehend the whole extent of my decrees, and to see in a clear and distinct manner the influence they have on the destiny of man: but I who formed them perfectly understand them. I am truth itself, as I am wisdom. I do declare to you then, that none of my decrees offer violence to my creatures, and that your destruction can proceed from none but yourselves. As to the rest, you shall one day perfectly understand what you now understand only in part, and then you shall see with your own eyes what you now see only with mine. Cease then to anticipate a period, which my wisdom defers, and laying aside this speculation attend you to practice, fully persuaded that you are placed between reward and punishment, and may have a part in which you please. Is it not true, my brethren, that if God had answered in this manner, it would be carrying, I do not say rashness, but insolence to the highest degree to object against the testimony, or to desire more light into this subject at present? Now, my brethren, we pretend that God hath given this answer, and in a manner infinitely more clear than we have stated it.

He hath given this answer in those pathetical expostulations, in those powerful applications, and in those exhortations, which he employs to reclaim the greatest sinners. Now if the decrees of God forced sinners, if they did violence to their liberty, would the equity of God allow him

to

Were I to follow my own inclination, I sh… them this cautious reserve: but as silence on this s… times an occasion of imaginary triumph to … concern- religion, and as it sometimes causes scru… shed for sciences, I think it absolutely necessa… *I unto me!* toward removing this objection, and … *this thy day,* though we are incapable of fully sa… sal. lxxxi. 14. subject, yet there is nothing in th… orce sinners, if to the insults of infidels, or the … not afraid to say, pulous.

Now, my brethren, it … worthy of the di- imagine any more than t… xpress assurances, that *he* subject: the one is to … *d;* that *he hath no pleasure* of God, and to con… *d, but that the wicked turn from* tions of sinners as … at *he is not willing that any should* that sinners are … *all should come to repentance.* Now if crimes, as ca… *God* force sinners, and do violence to their to refer the … propositions are true; it would be proper most uns… we ma… *will not* have all men to be saved, he will *not* decla… sinner come to repentance, he is determined the … *shall* die.

He hath published this answer by giving us high ideas of his mercy; when he prolongs the time of his patience and long suffering, he calls it *riches of goodness, forbearance and long suffering.* Now if the decrees of God force sinners, if they offer violence to their liberty, God would not be more merciful, if he grants fourscore years to a wicked man to repent in, than if he took him away suddenly on the commission of his first sin.

He hath given this answer expressly in the text, and in many other parallel passages, where he clearly tells us, that after what he had done to save us, there are no difficulties insurmountable in our salvation, except such as we choose to put there. For if the divine decrees force men to sin, and offer violence to their liberty, the proposition in the text would be utterly false, and the prophet could not say on the part of God, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.*

As the first way of removing our difficulties is absolutely impassible, the second is fully open. God hath not thought proper to give us a distinct idea of the connection between his decrees and the liberty of sinners: but he hath openly declared that they do not clash together. Let us make no more vain efforts to explain mysteries, a clear demonstration of which God hath reserved for another life: but let us attend to

to that law, which he hath required us to obey in the present state.

But men will run counter to the declarations of God in scripture. *Things that are revealed, which belong unto us and our children for ever*, we leave, and we lay our rash hands on *secret things, which belong unto the Lord our God.* We lay aside charity, moderation, mutual patience, duties clearly revealed, powerfully pressed home, and repeated with the utmost fervour, and we set ourselves the task of removing insuperable difficulties, to read and turn over the book of God's decrees. We regulate and arrange the decrees of God, we elevate our pretended discoveries into articles essential to salvation and religion, and at length we generate doubts and fears, which distress us on a death bed, and oblige us to undergo the intolerable punishment of trying to reconcile doctrines, the clearing of which is beyond the capacity of all mankind.

No, no, it was not thy decree, O my God, that dug hell, and kindled the *devouring fire*, the *smoke of which ascendeth up for ever and ever!* In vain the sinner searches in a decree of reprobation for what comes only from his own depravity. Thou dost not say to thy creatures, yield, yield miserable wretches to my sovereign will, which first impels you to sin, in order to compel you to suffer that punishment, which I have decreed for you from all eternity. Thou reachest out thy charitable arms, thou appliest to us motives the most proper to affect intelligent minds. Thou openest the gates of heaven to us, and if we be lost amidst so many means of being saved, *to thee belongeth righteousnes, and to us shame and confusion of face. O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself.*

II. You will see the evidence of this proposition much better, my brethren, if you attend to the discussion of the second class of difficulties, to which the subject is liable. They are taken from the nature of *religion*. There are men so stupid, or rather so wicked, as to consider religion, that rich present which God in his great love made mankind, as a fatal present given in anger. The duties required seem to them vast vallies to fill up, and huge mountains to level, and attributing insuperable difficulties to religion, which are creatures only of their own cowardice and malice, they cannot comprehend how men can be punished for not performing such impossible conditions. Let us examine this religion; nothing more is neccessary to remove this odious objection.

1. Observe

1. Observe the first character of evangelical morality, how *clearly it is revealed.* Let heresy attack the truth of our mysteries. If demonstrative arguments cannot be produced, probable ones may; if the doctrines cannot be expunged from the letter of scripture, at least they may be disguised; if they cannot be rendered contemptible, they may for a while be made difficult to understand: but propositions that concern moral virtue are placed in a light so clear, that, far from extinguishing it, nothing can diminish its brightness. Religion clearly requires a magistrate to be equitable and a subject obedient; a father tender and a son dutiful; a husband affectionate and a wife faithful; a master gentle and a servant diligent; a pastor vigilant and a flock teachable. Religion clearly requires us to exercise moderation in prosperity, and patience in adversity. Religion clearly requires us to be wholly attentive to the divine majesty, when we are at the foot of his throne, and never to lose sight of him after our devotions are finished. Religion clearly requires us to perform all the duties of our calling through the whole course of life, and wholly to renounce the world when we come to die. Except some extraordinary cases (and would to God, my brethren, we had arrived at such a degree of perfection as rendered it necessary for us to examine what conduct we ought to observe in some circumstances, which the law seems not to have fully explained!) I say, except such cases, all others are regulated in a manner so clear, distinct and intelligible, that we not only cannot invent any difficulties, but that, except a few idiots, nobody hath ever pretended to invent any.

2. The next character of christian morality is *dignity of principle.* Why did God give us laws? Because he loves us, and because he would have us love him. Why doth he require us to bear the cross? Because he loves us, because he would have us love him, and because infatuation with creatures is incompatible with this twofold love. Why doth he require us to deny ourselves? Because he loves us, and because he would have us love him, because it is impossible for him to love us and yet to permit our ill-directed self-love to hurry us blindly into a gulf of misery, because it is impossible if we love him to love ourselves in a manner so inglorious to him. How pleasant is it to submit to bonds, which the love of God imposes on us! How delightful is it to yield to obligations, when the love of God supports us under the weight of them!

3. The

3. The third character of christian morality is the *justice* of its dominion. All its claims are founded on reason and equity. Examine the laws of religion one by one, and you will find they all bear this character. Doth religion prescribe humility? It doth: but what is this humility? Is it a virtue that shocks reason, and degrades the dignity of human nature? By no means, the gospel proposes to elevate us to the highest dignity that we are capable of attaining. But what then doth it mean by requiring us to be humble? It means, that we should not estimate ourselves by such titles and riches, such dignities and exterior things as we have in common with men like Caligula, Nero, Heliogabalus, and other monsters of nature, scourges of society. Does religion require mortification? It doth, it even describes it by the most painful emblems. It requires us to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye, to tear asunder all the ties of flesh and blood, nature and self-love. But what doth it mean by prescribing such mortification as this? Must we literally hate ourselves, and must we take as much pains hereafter to make ourselves miserable as we have taken hitherto to make ourselves happy? No, my brethren, on the contrary, no doctrine hath ever carried self-love properly explained so far. The christian doctrine of mortification means, that by a few momentary acts of self-denial we should free ourselves from eternal misery, and that by contemning *temporal things which are seen* we should obtain *things which are not seen, but which are eternal.*

4. But, say you, this perfection required by the gospel, is it within our reach? Is it not this religion, which exhorts us to be *perfect as God is perfect?* Is not this the religion that exhorts us to *be holy as God is holy?* Doth not this religion require us to be *renewed after the image of him that created us?* Indeed it doth, my brethren: yet this law, severe as it may seem, hath a fourth character exactly according to our just wishes, that is, it hath a character of *proportion!* As we see in the doctrines of religion, that although they open a vast field to the most sublime geniuses, yet they accommodate themselves to the most contracted minds, so in regard to the moral parts of religion, though the most eminent saints are required to make more progress, yet the first efforts of novices are acceptable services, provided they are sincerely disposed to persevere. Jesus Christ, our great lawgiver, *knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust: he will not break a bruised reed, and smoaking flax he will*

not quench: and the rule, by which he will judge us, will not be so much taken from the infinite rights acquired over us by creation and redemption as from our frailty, and the efforts we shall have made to surmount it.

5. *Power of motive* is another character of evangelical morality. In this life we are animated, I will not say only, by gratitude, equity and reason, motives too noble to actuate most men: but by motives interesting to our passions, and proper to inflame them, if they be well and thoroughly understood.

You have ambition. But how do you mean to gratify it? By a palace, a dress, a few servants, a few horses in your carriage? False idea of grandeur, fanciful elevation! I see in a course of christian virtue an ambition well directed. To approach God, to be like God, to be made a *partaker of the divine nature;* this is true grandeur, this is substantial glory.

You are avaricious, hence perpetual care, hence anxious fears, hence never ending movements. But how can your avarice bear to think of all the vicissitudes that may affect your fortune. In a course of christian virtue I see an avarice well directed. The gospel promiseth a fortune beyond vicissitude, and directs us to a faithful correspondent, who will return us for one grain thirty, for another sixty, for another a hundred fold.

You are voluptuous, and you refine sensual enjoyments, tickle your appetite, and sleep in a bed of down! I see in a course of virtue a *joy unspeakable and full of glory, a peace that passeth all understanding*, pleasures boundless in prospect, and delicious in enjoyment, pleasures greater than the liveliest imagination can conceive, and more beautiful than the most eloquent lips can describe.

Such is religion, my brethren. What a fund of stupidity, negligence, and corruption must a man have to resist it? Is this the religion we must oppose in order to be damned! *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.*

III. Well, well, we grant, say you, we are stupid not to avail ourselves of such advantages as religion sets before us, we are negligent, we are depraved; but all this depravity, negligence, and stupidity are natural to us, we bring these dispositions into the world with us, we did not make them ourselves, in a word, we are naturally inclined to evil, and incapable

incapable of doing good. This religion teaches, of this we are convinced by our own feelings, and the experience of all mankind confirms it.

This is the third difficulty concerning the proposition in the text, and it is taken from the condition of *human nature.* In answer to this I say, that the objection implies four vague notions of human depravity, each erroneous, and all removable by a clear explication of the subject.

1. When we speak of our natural impotence to practise virtue, we confound it with an insurmountable necessity to commit the greatest crimes. We may be in the first case without being in the second. We may be sick, and incapable of procuring medicines to restore health, without being invincibly impelled to aggravate our condition by taking poison for food, and a dagger for physic. A man may be in a pit without ability to get out, and yet not be invincibly compelled to throw himself into a chasm beneath him, deeper and darker, and more terrible still. In like manner, we may be so enslaved by depravity as not to be able to part with any thing to relieve the poor, and yet not so as to be absolutely compelled to rob them of the alms bestowed on them by others, and so of the rest.

It seems to me, my brethren, that this distinction hath not been attended to in discourses of human depravity. Let people allege this impotence to exculpate themselves for not practising virtue, with all my heart: but to allege it in excuse of odious crimes practised every day freely, willingly, and of set purpose, is to form such an idea of natural depravity as no divine hath ever given, and such as can never be given with the least appearance of truth. No sermon, no body of divinity, no council, no synod ever said that human depravity was so great as absolutely to force a man to become an assassin, a murderer, a slanderer, a plunderer of the fortune, and a destroyer of the life of his neighbour, or, what is worse than either, a murderer of his reputation and honour. Had such a proposition been advanced, it would not be the more probable for that, and nothing ought to induce us to spare it. Monsters of nature! Who, after you have taken pains to eradicate from your hearts such fibres of virtue as sin seems to have left, would you attempt to exculpate yourselves; you who, after you have rendered yourselves in every instance unlike God, would carry your madness so far as to render God like yourselves by accusing him of creating you with dispositions, which oblige you to dip your hands

in innocent blood, to build your houses with the spoils of widows and orphans, and to commit crimes subversive of society? Cease to affirm, these are natural dispositions. No, they are acquired dispositions. That part of religion, which prohibits your excesses, is practicable by you without the supernatural aid necessary to a thorough conversion.

2. When we speak of natural depravity, we confound the pure virtue that religion inspires with other virtues, which constitution, education, and motives of worldly honour are sufficient to enable us to practise. I grant, you cannot practise such virtues as have the love of God for their principle, order for their motives and perfection for their end: but you may at least acknowledge your natural depravity, and exclaim, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* You may at least exclaim with the magician mentioned by a poet, I see and approve of the best things, though I practise the worst. You may do more, you may practise some superficial virtues, which the very heathens, not in covenant with God, exemplified. You may be cautious like Ulysses, temperate like Scipio, chaste like Polemon, wise like Socrates. If then you neglect this sort of virtue, and if your negligence ruin you, *your destruction is of yourselves.*

3. When we speak of natural depravity, we confound that of a man born a pagan with only the light of reason with that of a christian, born and educated among christians, and amidst all the advantages of revelation. This vague way of talking is a consequence of the miserable custom of taking detached passages of scripture, considering them only in themselves without any regard to connection of time, place or circumstance, and applying them indiscriminately to their own imaginations and systems. The inspired writers give us dreadful descriptions of the state of believers before their being called to christianity: they call this state a *night*, a *death*, a *nothing*, in regard to the practise of virtue, and certainly the state of a man now living without religion under the gospel œconomy may be properly described in the same manner: but yet I affirm, that these expressions must be taken in a very different sense. This *night*, this *death*, this *nothing*, if I may be allowed to speak so, have different degrees. The degrees in regard to a native pagan are greater than those in regard to a native christian. What then, my brethren, do you reckon for nothing all the care taken of you in your infancy, all the instructions given you

in

in your childhood by your pious fathers and mothers, all the lessons they procured others to give you, all the tutors who have given you information! What! agreeable books put into your hands, exhortations, directions, and sermons addressed to you, you reckon all these things for nothing! What! you make no account of the visits of your pastors, when you thought yourselves dying, of the proper discourses they directed to you concerning your past negligence, of your own resolutions and vows! I ask, do you reckon all this for nothing? All these efforts have been attended with no good effect: but you are as ambitious, as worldly, as envious, as covetous, as eager in pursuit of lasciviousness, as ever the heathens were, and you never blush, nor ever feel remorse, and all under pretence that the gospel teaches us we are frail, and can do nothing without the assistance of God!

4. In fine, my brethren, when we speak of the depravity of nature, we confound the condition of a man, to whom God hath given only exterior revelation, with the condition of him to whom God offers supernatural aid to assist him against his natural frailty, which prevents his living up to external revelation. Doth he not offer you this assistance? Doth not the holy scripture teach you in a hundred places that it is your own fault if you be deprived of it?

Recollect only the famous words of St. James, which were lately explained to you in this pulpit with the greatest clearness and pressed home with the utmost pathos. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* God giveth to all men liberally, to all without exception, and they who are deprived of this wisdom ought to blame none but themselves, not God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not.

True, to obtain it we must ask it with a design to profit by it; we must ask it *nothing wavering*, that is, not divided between the hope and the fear of obtaining it; we must not be like those *double minded men, who are unstable in all their ways*, who seem by asking wisdom to esteem virtue, but who discover by the abuse they make of what wisdom they have that virtue is supremely hateful to them. We must not resemble the *waves of the sea*, which seem to offer the spectator on shore a treasure, but which presently drown him in gulphs from which he cannot possibly free himself. Doth God set this wisdom before us at a price

a price too high? Ought we to find fault with him for refusing to bestow it, while we refuse to apply it to that moral use which justice requires? Can we desire God to bestow his grace on such as ask for it only to insult him?

O! That we were properly affected with the greatness of our depravity, and the shame of our slavery? But our condition, all scandalous and horrible as it is, seems to us all full of charms.

When we are told that sin hath subverted nature, infected the air, confounded in a manner cold with heat, heat with cold, wet with dry, dry with wet, and disconcerted the beautiful order of creation, which constituted the happiness of creatures; when we cast our eyes on the maladies caused by sin, the vicissitudes occasioned by it, the dominion of death over all creatures, which it hath established; when we see ourselves stretched on a sick bed, cold, pale, dying amidst sorrows and tears, fears and pains, waiting to be torn from a world we idolize; then we detest sin, and groan under the weight of its chains. Should that spirit, who *knocks* to day *at the door* of our hearts, say to us, open, sinner, I will restore nature to its beauty, the air shall be serene, and all the elements in harmony, I will confirm your health, reanimate your enfeebled frame, lengthen your life, and banish for ever from your houses death, that death which stains all your rooms with blood: Ah! every heart would burn with ardour to possess this assistance, and every one of my hearers would make these walls echo with, come holy spirit, come and dry up our tears by putting an end to our maladies.

But when we are told, that sin hath degraded us from our natural dignity; that it hath loaded us with chains of depravity; that man, a creature formed on the model of the divine perfections, and required to receive no other laws than those of order, is become the sport of unworthy passions, which move him as they please, which say to him go and he goeth, come and he cometh, which debase and villify him at pleasure, we are not affected with these mortifying truths, but we glory in our shame!

Slaves of sin! Captives under a heavier yoke than that of Pharaoh, in a furnace more cruel than that of Egypt! Behold your deliverer! He comes to day to break your bonds and set you free. The assistance of grace is set before you. What am I saying? An abundant measure is already communicated to you. Already you know your misery. Already

ready you are seeking relief from it. Avail yourself of this. Ask for this succour, and if it be refused you ask again, and never cease asking till you have obtained it.

Recollect, that the truths we have been preaching are the most mortifying of religion, and the most proper to humble us. It was voluntarily, that we so often rebelled against God. Freely, alas! Freely, and without compulsion we have some of us denied the truths of religion, and others given mortal wounds to the majesty of its laws. Ah! Are there any tears too bitter, is there any remorse too cutting, any cavern in the earth too deep to expiate the guilt of such a frightful character!

Remember, the truths we have been teaching are full of consolation. This part of my text, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*, is connected with the other part *but in me is thine help*. God yet intreats us not to destroy ourselves. God hath not yet given us up. He doth not know, pardon this expression, he is a stranger to that point of honour, which often engages us to turn away for ever from those who have treated us with contempt. He, he himself, the great, the Mighty God doth not think it beneath him, not unworthy of his glorious majesty yet to intreat us to return to him and be happy. O *mercy*, that *reacheth to the heavens!* O *faithfulness reaching unto the clouds!* What consolations flow from you to a soul afraid of having exhausted you!

Above all, think, think, my brethren, that the truth we have been preaching will become one of the most cruel torments in the damned. Devouring flame, kindled by divine vengeance in hell, I have no need of your light; smoke ascending up for ever and ever, I have no need to be struck with your blackness; chains of darkness, that weigh down the damned, I have no need to know your weight, to enable me to form lamentable ideas of the punishments of the reprobate, the truth in my text is sufficient to make me conceive your horror. Being lost, it will be remembered that there was a time when destruction might have been prevented. One of you will recollect the education God gave you, another the sermon he addressed to you, a third the sickness he sent to reform you: conscience will be obliged to do homage to an avenging God, it will be forced to allow, that the aid of the Spirit of God was mighty, the motives of the gospel powerful, and the duties of it practicable. It will be compelled to acquiesce in this terrible truth,

truth, *thou hast destroyed thyself.* A condemned soul will incessantly be its own tormentor, and will continually say, I am the author of my own punishment, I might have been saved, I opened and entered this horrible gulf of myself.

Inculcate all these great truths, christians, let them affect you, let them persuade you, let them *compel* you. God grant you the grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

THE GRIEF OF THE RIGHTEOUS FOR THE MISCONDUCT OF THE WICKED.

PSALM cxix. 136.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.

FEW people are such novices in religion as not to know, that sinners ought to be troubled for their own sins: but it is but here and there a man, who enters so much into the spirit of religion as to understand how far the sins of others ought to trouble us. David was a model of both these kinds of penitential grief.

Repentance for his own sins is immortalized in his penitential psalms: and would to God, instead of that fatal security, and that unmeaning levity, which most of us discover, even after we have grossly offended God, would to God, we had the sentiments of this penitent! His sin was always before him, and imbittered all the pleasures of life. You know the language of his grief. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak, my bones are vexed. Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, that the bones, which thou hast broken, may rejoice.*

But as David gives us such proper models of penitential expressions of grief for our own sins, so he furnisheth us with others as just for lamenting the sins of others. You have heard the text, *rivers of waters run down mine eyes,*

because they keep not thy law. Read the psalm from which the text is taken, and you will find, that our prophet shed three sorts of tears for the sins of others. The first were tears of zeal: the second flowed from love: the third from self-interest. This is the kind of penitence, which I propose to day to your emulation.

In the first place, I will describe the insults, which a sinner offers to *God*, and will endeavour to shew you, that it is impossible for a good man to see his God affronted in this manner without being extremely grieved, and shedding tears of *zeal.*

In the second place, I will enumerate the miseries, into which *a sinner* plunges *himself* by his obstinate perseverance in sin, and I will endeavour to convince you, that it is impossible for a good man to see this without shedding tears of *pity* and *love.*

In the third place, I shall shew you, if I perceive your attention continue, the disorders, which sinners cause in *society*, in our cities and families, and you will perceive, that it is impossible for a good man to see the prosperity of society every day endangered and damaged by its enemies without shedding tears of *self-interest.*

Almighty God, whose *tender mercies are over all thy works*, but whose adorable providence condemns us to wander in a valley of tears, O condescend, *to put our tears into thy bottle*, and to gather us in due time to that happy society, in which conformity to thy laws is the highest happiness and glory! Amen.

I. David shed over sinners of his time tears of *zeal.* Thus he expressed himself in the psalm, from which we have taken the text, *My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.* But what is zeal? How many people to exculpate themselves for not feeling this sacred flame ridicule it as a phantom, the mark of an enthusiast? However, there is no disposition more real and sensible. The word, *zeal*, is vague and metaphorical, it signifies fire, heat, warmth, and, applied to intelligent beings, it means the activity, and vehemence of their desires, hence in common style it is attributed to all the passions indifferently, good and bad: but it is most commonly applied to religion, and there it hath two meanings, the one vague, the other precise.

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In a vague sense zeal is put less for a particular virtue, than for a general vigour and vivacity pervading all the powers of the soul of a zealous man. Zeal is opposed to lukewarmness, and lukewarmness is not a particular vice, but a dulness, an indolence, that accompanies and enfeebles all the exercises of the religion of a lukewarm man On the contrary, zeal is a fire animating all the emotions of the piety of the man, who hath it, and giving them all the worth and weight of vehemence.

But as the most noble exercises of religion are such as have God for their object, and as the virtue of virtues, or, as Jesus Christ expresseth it, *the first and great commandment* is that of divine love, zeal is particularly taken (and this is the precise meaning of the word) for loving God, not for a love limited and moderate, such as that which we ought to have for creatures, even creatures the most worthy of esteem, but a love boundless and beyond moderation, so to speak, like that of glorified spirits to the Supreme Intelligence, whose perfections have no limits, whose beauties are infinite.

The idea thus fixed, it is easy to comprehend, that a soul animated with zeal cannot see without the deepest sorrow the insults offered by sinners to his God. What object is it, that kindles flames of zeal in an ingenuous soul? It is the union of three attributes: an attribute of magnificence, an attribute of holiness, and an attribute of communication. This union can be found only in God, and for this reason God only is worthy of supreme love. Every being, in whom any one of these three attributes is wanting, yea any being in whom any degree is wanting, is not, cannot be an object of supreme love.

In vain would God possess attributes of charitable communication, if he did not possess attributes of magnificence. His attributes of communication would indeed inspire me with sentiments of gratitude: but what benefit should I derive from his inclination to make me happy, if he had not power sufficient to do so, and if he were not himself the *happy God*, that is, the origin, the source of all felicity, or, as an inspired writer speaks, *the parent of every good and every perfect gift?* James i. 17. In this case he would reach a feeble hand to help me, he would shed unavailing tears over my miseries, and I could not say to him, my supreme *good* is *to draw near to thee, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,* Psal. lxxiii. 28, 25.

In vain would God possess attributes of holiness, if he did not possess attributes of communication. In this case he would indeed be an object of my admiration, but he could not be the ground of my hope. I should be struck with the contemplation of a virtue always pure, always firm, and always alike: but in regard to me it would be only an abstract and metaphysical virtue, which could have no influence over my happiness. Follow this reasoning in regard to the other attributes, and you will perceive that nothing but an union of these three can render an object supremely lovely, and as this union can be found only in God, it is God only who can be the object of zeal, or, what is the same thing expressed in other words, God alone is worthy of supreme love.

As we make a progress in our meditation, and in proportion as we acquire a just notion of true zeal, we shall enter into the spirit and meaning of the words of our psalmist. Do you love God as he did? Does your heart burn like his with flames of divine zeal? Then you can finish the first part of my discourse, for you know by experience this disposition of mind, *my zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*

Sinners, I do not mean such as sin through infirmity and surprize, the text does not speak of them, I mean such as sin openly, freely and deliberately, these sinners attack the perfections of God, either his attributes of magnificence, or those of holiness, or those of communication, and sometimes all three together. They endeavour to disconcert the beautiful harmony of the divine perfections, and so to rob us of all we adore, the only worthy object of our esteem.

They attack the magnificence of God. Such are those madmen, who employ all the depth of their erudition, all the accuteness of their genius, and all the fire of their fancy to obscure the eternity of the first cause, the infinity of his power, the infallibility of his wisdom, and every other perfection, that makes a part of that complexiure, or combination of excellences, which we call magnificence. Such, again, are those abominable characters, who supply the want of genius with the depravity of their hearts, and the blasphemies of their mouths, and who, not being able to attack him with specious reasonings and plausible sophisms, endeavour to stir up his subjects to rebel, defying his power, and trying whether it be possible to deprive him of the empire of the world.

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Some sinners attack the attributes of holiness in the perfect God. Such are those detestable men, who presume to tax him with falsehood and deceit, who deny the truth of his promises, who accuse his laws of injustice, and his conduct of prevarication, who would persuade us, that the reins of the universe would be held much more wisely by their impure hands than by those of the *judge of all the earth.*

Some sinners attack the attributes of communication. Such, in the first instance, are those ungrateful persons, who, while they breathe only his air, and live only on his aliments, while only his earth bears, and only his sun illuminates them, while they neither *live*, nor *move*, nor *have a being*, but what they derive from him, while he opens to them the path to supreme happiness, I mean the road of faith and obedience, pretend that he is wanting in goodness, charge him with all the miseries, into which they have the madness to plunge themselves, dare to accuse him with taking pleasure in tormenting his creatures, and in the sufferings of the unfortunate; who wish the goodness of the Supreme Being were regulated by their caprice, or rather by their madness, and will never consent to worship him as good, except he allows them with impunity to gratify their most absurd and guilty passions.

Observe too, people may be profane by actions as well as by system and reasoning. If sinners attack the attributes of God directly, it is equally true, they make an indirect attack upon the same perfections.

Here I wish, my brethren, each of us had accustomed himself to derive his morality from evangelical sources, to hear the language of inspired writers, and to judge of his own actions not by such flattering portaits as his own prejudices produce, but by the essential properties of morality as it is described in the word of God.

For example, what is a man, who coolly puts himself under the protection of another man without taking any thought about the guardianship of God? He is a profane wretch, who declares war against God, and attacks his attributes of magnificence by attributing more power to the patron, under whose wing he creeps and thinks himself secure, than to that God who takes the title of *King of kings.* What I say of confidence in a king, I affirm of confidence in all other creatures, whoever or whatever they be. On this principle the psalmist grounded this exhortation, *put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man, in whom there is*

is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. On this principle is this other declaration of a prophet founded, *cursed be the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.* And it is on this principle that sacred history imputes so great a crime to Asa, because when he fell sick, and saw himself reduced to extremity, *he sought to the physicians, and not to the Lord.*

What is a man, who gives up his heart to idolize any particular object? What is a man who follows certain sympathies, a certain secret influence, certain charms omnipotent to him, because he chooses to yield to their omnipotence? He is a profane wretch, who declares war against God, and who attacks his attributes of communication; he is a man, who attests by his conduct that there is more pleasure in his union to his idol than there can be in communion with God; he is a man, who maintains by his actions that this creature, to whom he gives himself up without reserve, merits more love, and knows how to return love with more delicacy and constancy than that God, who is the only model of perfect love; he is a man, who resists this invitation of eternal wisdom, *my son give me thine heart*, and who disputes a truth, that ought to be considered as a first principle in a system of love, *in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11.

Let us abridge this part of our discourse, and let us return to the chief end we proposed. A sinner, who sins openly, freely, of set purpose, attacks the attributes of God, either his attributes of greatness, or his attributes of communication, or his attributes of holiness, sometimes all the three together. A good man, who sincerely loves God, can he look with indifference on such insults offered to the object of his love? And in which of the saints, whom the inspired writers have proposed as examples to you, have you discovered this guilty indifference?

Behold Moses. He comes down from the holy mountain, he hears the acclamations of those madmen, who were celebrating a foolish feast in honour of their idol, and he replies to Joshua, who thought it was a war-shout, *Ah! no, it is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear*, Exod. xxxii.

xxxii. 18. Convinced by his own eyes, he trembles at the sight, breaks the tables of the law, on which God had engraven with his own adorable hand the clauses of the covenant, which this people were now violating, he runs to the *gate of the camp*, and cries, *who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.* And when *all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him, he said unto them, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate, throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour*, ver. 26, 27. See Phinehas. He perceives Moses and Aaron *weeping at the door of the tabernacle*, because the people had forsaken the worship of God, and gone over to that of Baal-peor; touched with their grief he *rises up*, quits the congregation, *takes a javelin in his hand* and stabs an Israelite with the immodest Midianite, who had enticed the people into this abominable idolatry. Behold Elijah. *I am very jealous*, saith he, *for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken his covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his prophets with the sword*, 1 Kings xix. 10. Remark St. Paul. *His spirit was stirred in him* to see a nation, in other respects the most learned and polite, rendering to *an unknown God* such homage as was due to none but the Most High, whose *glory the heavens declare, and whose handywork the firmament sheweth.* Behold the royal prophet, *Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies*, Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. *My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. Rivers of tears*, tears of which my zeal for thy glory is the first cause.

II. Although the sinner be hateful as a sinner, yet as an unhappy person he is an object of pity, and it is possible he may preclude future ills by repentance. As to love God with all the heart is the first and great commandment, so *the second is like unto it, thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself.* Sin is a source of misery to a sinner, and it is impossible for a good man to see, without shedding tears of *love and pity*, the depths of woe into which people united to him by bonds of affection plunge themselves by their obstinacy in sin, Every

Every thing favours this subject. In regard to the present life, a man living according to laws of virtue is incomparably more happy than he, who gives himself up to vice. So the holy Spirit hath declared, *godliness hath promise of the life that now is*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Though this general rule hath some exceptions, yet they cannot regard the serenity of mind, the peace of the conscience, the calm of the passions, the confidence of good men, their steadiness in the calamities of life, and their intrepidity at the approach of death. All these advantages, and many others, without which the most brilliant condition, and the most delicious life are only a splendid slavery, and a source of grief, all these advantages, I say, are inseparable from piety. A charitable man cannot see, without deep affliction, objects of his tenderest love renounce such inestimable advantages, poison the pleasure of their own life, open an inexhaustible sourse of remorse, and prepare for themselves racks and tortures.

But, my brethren, these are only the least subjects of our present contemplation. We have other bitter reflections to make, and other tears to shed, and there is exposition of charity more just, and at the same time more lamentable, of the words of my text, *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.*

I am thinking of the eternal misery, in which sinners involve themselves. We are united to sinners by ties of nature, by bonds of society, and by obligations of religion, and who can help trembling to think that persons, round whom so many tendrils of affectionate ligaments twine, should be threatened with everlasting torments! Some people are so much struck with this thought; that they think, when we shall be in heaven all ideas of people related to us on earth will be effaced from our memory, that we shall entirely lose the power of remembering, that we shall not even know such as share celestial happiness with us, lest the idea of such as are deprived of it should diminish our pleasure, and imbitter our happines. It would be easy, in my opinion to remove this difficulty, if it were necessary now. In heaven order, and order alone will be the foundation of our happiness; and if order condemns the persons we shall have most esteemed, our happiness will not be affected by their misery. We shall love only in God; we shall feel no attachment to any, who do not love God as we do; their cries will not move us, nor will their torments excite our compassion. But

But while we are in this world, God would have us affected with the misery, that threatens a sinner, that our own feelings may excite us to prevent it. You have sometimes admired one of the most marvellous phenomena of nature; nature hath united us together by invisible bonds, it hath formed our fibres in perfect unison with the fibres of our neighbour; we cannot see him exposed to violent pain without receiving a counter blow, an unvaried tone that sounds relief to him, and forces us to assist him. This is the work of that Creator, whose infinite goodness is seen in all his productions He intends, that these sentiments of commiseration in us should be so many magazines to supply what the temporal miseries of our neighbours require.

So in regard to eternity, there is a harmony, and, if you will allow the expression, there is an unison of Spirits. While we are in this world, an idea of the eternal destruction of a person we esteem suspends the pleasure, which a hope of salvation promised to ourselves would otherwise cause. It is the work of the Creator, whose goodness shines brighter in religion than in the works of nature. That horror, which is caused by a bare appearance, that the man we so tenderly love should be reserved for eternal torments, I say, the bare suspicion of such a calamitous event compels us to flee to the aid of the unhappy object of our esteem, to pluck him from the jaws of destruction by reclaiming him from his errors with the force of exhortation and the power of example. To combat these sentiments is to oppose the intention of God; to tear these from our hearts is to disrobe ourselves of that charity, without which there is no religion.

Accordingly, the more a mind becomes perfect in the exercise of this virtue, the more it hath of this kind of sensibility. Hence it was that St. Paul so sharply reproved the Corinthians, because they had not *mourned* on account of that incestuous person, who had digraced their church. Hence it was, that Moses, when he discovered that gross idolatry, of which we just now spoke, gave himself up to the deepest sorrow, and said to the Lord, *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin! Yet now, forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.* Hence it was that Jeremiah said to the Jews of his time, who were going captives into a foreign land, where they would be destitute of the comfort of religion, *give glory to God before he*

cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. Hence this declaration of Paul to the Philippians, *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.* Hence it was that Jesus Christ, the chief model of charity, when he overlooked the unhappy Jerusalem, and saw the heavy judgments coming upon it, *wept over it,* saying, *O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Here I venture to defy those of you, who glory in insensibility, to be insensible and void of feeling. No, nothing but the most confirmed inattention to futurity, nothing but the wretched habit we have formed of thinking of nothing but the present world can hinder our being affected with subjects which made the deepest impressions on the soul of the psalmist. Consider them as he did, and you will be affected as he was. You hardest hearts, try your insensibility, and see whether you can resist such reflections as these! This friend, who is my counsel in difficulty, my support in trouble, my comfort in adversity; this friend, who constitutes the pleasure of my life, will be perhaps for ever excluded from that happiness in heaven, to which all my hopes and wishes tend; when I shall be in the society of angels, he will be in the company of devils; when he shall knock at the door of the bridegroom, who opened to me, he will receive this answer, *verily, I say unto you, I know you not.* This catechumen, in whose mind I endeavoured to inculcate the truths of religion; a part of the men, whom I thought I had subdued to Jesus Christ; a great number of these hearers, whom I often told, that they would be my joy and crown in the day of the Lord (certainly *you are our joy and crown)* will perhaps be one day disowned by Jesus Christ in the face of heaven and earth. This pastor, whom I considered as my guide in the way to heaven, this pastor will himself experience all the horrors of that state, of which he gave me such dreadful ideas. This husband, to whom providence united me, this husband, whom I esteemed as part of myself, I shall perhaps one day consider as my most mortal foe, I

shall

shall acquiesce in his damnation, I shall praise God and say, *Hallelujah, power belongeth unto the Lord our God! True and righteous are his judgments! Hallelujah, the smoke of the torment* of him, whose company once constituted my happiness, *shall rise up for ever and ever!* This child, in behalf of whom I feel I exhaust all that the power of love hath of tenderness, this child, whose least cry pierces my soul, and who feels no pain without my feeling a thousand times more for him, this child will be seized with horror, when he shall see coming in the clouds of heaven surrounded with holy angels that Jesus, whose coming will overwhelm me with joy; this child will then seek refuge in dens, and caverns, and chasms, he will cry in agony of despair, *Mountains and rocks, fall on me and hide me from the wrath of the Lamb!* He will be loaded with chains of darkness, he will be a prey to the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that never will be quenched, and when Jesus Christ shall say to me in that great day, *Come thou blessed of my Father*, I shall hear this dreadful sentence denounced against this child, *depart, thou cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* Too just a subject of grief! *Rivers of waters*, tears of love and pity, *run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.*

III. So earnestly do I desire to have your attention fixed on the objects just now mentioned, that I shall hardly venture to finish the plan I proposed, and to proceed to a third plan of this discourse. I wish you were so alarmed with the eternal misery, that threatens to overwhelm your fellow citizens and friends, your husbands and children, and so employed to prevent it, that you were become as it were insensible to the temporal ills, to which the enemies of God expose you. However, we do not pretend that love to our neighbours should make us forget what we owe ourselves. As the excesses of the wicked made our prophet shed tears of charity; so they caused him to shed tears of *self-interest.*

The wicked are the scourgers of society. One seditious person is often sufficient to disturb the state: one factious spirit is often enough to set a whole church in a flame; one profligate child is often enough to poison the pleasures of the most happy and harmonious family. Good people are generally the butts of the wicked. A wicked man hates a good

man. He hates him, when he hath not the power to hurt him, because he hath not had the pleasure of hurting him; he hates him, after he hath injured him, because he considers him as a man always ready to revenge the affront offered him; and if he thinks him superior to revenge, he hates him because he is incapable of vengeance, and because the patience of the offended and the rage of the offender form a contrast, which renders the latter abominable in the eyes of all equitable people.

A good man, on the contrary, is happy in the company of another good man. What countrymen feel, when they meet in a foreign land where interests and customs, maxims and views, all different from those of the land of their nativity, resembles the pleasure believers experience, when they associate in a world, where they are only *strangers and pilgrims.* Accordingly, one of the most ardent wishes of our prophet was to be always in company with people of this kind, *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts,* said he to God. In another place, *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.* And again, *All my delight is in the excellent saints that are in the earth.*

But how few of these saints did he find! Most of his misfortunes were brought on him by the very sinners, whose depravity he deplores. They were the poison of his life, and them he always saw standing ready to persecute him, and to discharge against his person the impotent malice they had against that God, whose servant he considered it as his glory to be.

Doth our age differ in this respect from that of David? are saints more numerous now than they were then? May a good man promise himself among you more approbation, more countenance and support than the psalmist found?

This is an odious question, and our doubts may seem to you illiberal. Well, we will not press it. But if the bulk of you be saints, this country must be the most delicious part of the whole universe. A good man must be as happy as it is possible to be in this world. In these provinces, free by constitution, opulent by trade, invincible by alliances, and perfectly safe by the nature of their government from tyrants and tyranny, if the number of saints be greater in these provinces than that of the wicked, it must be the most delicious

of

of all residences in this world for a good man; if he stumbles, you will charitably save him from falling, if he errs, you will patiently bear with him, and gently reclaim him, if he be oppressed, you will assist him with firmness and vigour, if he form schemes of piety, charity, and reformation, you will second him with eagerness and zeal, if he sacrifice his health, and ease, and fortune for your good, you will reward him with gratitude, yea with profusion. May a good man promise himself all this among you? Alas! To be only willing to devote himself to truth and virtue is often sufficient to cause him to be beset round with a company of contradicters, and opposers.

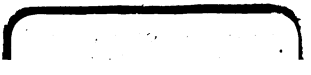
But we will not engage too deeply in such gloomy reflections, we will finish this discourse, and can we finish it in a manner more suitable to the emotions of piety that assembled you in this solemn assembly, than by repeating the prayer, with which we began? Almighty God! whose adorable judgments condemn us to wander in a valley of trouble, and to live, sometimes to be united by indissoluble ties, among men, who insolently brave thy commands, Almighty God! grant we may be gathered to that holy society of blessed Spirits, who place their happiness in a perfect conformity to thine august laws!

The occupation of the blessed in heaven (and this is one of the most beautiful images, under which a man, who loves his God can represent the happiness of heaven) the employment of the blessed in heaven is to serve God; their delight is to serve God; the design of all the plans, and all the actions, and all the motions of the blessed in heaven is to serve God. And as the most laudable grief of a believer in this unhappy world, which sin makes a theatre of bloody catastrophes, and an habitation of maledictions, is to see the unworty inhabitants violate the laws of their Creator, so the purest joy of blessed is to see themselves in a society, where all the members are always animated with a desire to please God, always ready to fly where his voice calls them, always collected in studying his holy laws.

This is the society, to which you, my dear brethren, are appointed, you who, after the example of Lot, *vex your righteous souls from day to day* at seeing the depravity of the world, you, I mean, *who shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*. Into that society those holy persons are gone, whom death hath taken from us, and a separation

separation from whom hath caused us so many sighs and tears. Behold faithful friend! behold the company, where now resides that friend, to whom thy soul was *knit, as the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David!* See, thou weeping Joseph! See that society where thy good father now is, that good Jacob whom thou didst convey to the grave with tears so bitter, that the inhabitants of Canaan called the place, where thou didst deposit the body *Abel-Mizraim, a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.* Look, frail father! look at that society, there is thy son, at whose death thou didst exclaim, *O Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!* And you, too, distressed Rachels! whose *voices* are *heard, lamenting, weeping,* and *mourning, refusing to be comforted, because your children are not,* see, behold there in heaven are your children, the dear objects of your grief and your love!

Oh! *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord! I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.* Let us apply this thought of the prophet to ourselves and may the application we make serve for a balm to heal the wounds, which the loss of our friends hath occasioned! *They shall not return to us,* they shall never return to this society. What a society! A society in which our life is nothing but a miserable round of errors and sins; a society where the greatest saints are great sinners; a society in which we are often obliged to communicate with the enemies of God, with blasphemers of his holy name, violaters of his august laws! No, they shall *not return to us,* and this is one consolation. But, (and this is the other) but *we shall go to them.* They have done nothing but set one step before us into eternity; the pleasures they enjoy are increased by the hope of our shortly enjoying the same with them. They with the highest transports behold *the mansions,* which Jesus Christ hath *prepared* for us *in the house of his Father. I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God,* said our divine Redeemer, to raise the drooping spirits of his apostles stunned with the apprehension of his approaching death. This is the language we have heard spoken, this is the declaration we have heard made by each of those, whom we have had the consolation of seeing die full of the peace of God, *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.* O may we be shortly united in the bosom of this adorable being with our departed friends, whose conversation

versation was lately so delightful to us, and whose memory will always continue respected and dear! May we be united with the redeemed of *all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,* in the presence of the blessed God! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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